DENNIS GRUENDING

A COMMUNIST FOR THE RCMP

The Uncovered Story of a SOCIAL MOVEMENT INFORMANT

FOREWORD BY
GREGORY S. KEALEY

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“The Canadian government has made exceptional efforts to erase or seclude documents related to decades of RCMP dirty tricks, but *A Communist for the RCMP* provides stunning insights into the nuts and bolts of the force’s infiltration campaigns. Dennis Gruending provides a rich and masterful narration of previously unseen informant files, creating an unrelenting account into the everyday work of RCMP infiltration. This book makes it clear that the RCMP have always been governed by the politics of capitalism and settler colonialism; it is a must-read for anyone looking to understand the politics of RCMP spying.”

Jeffrey Monaghan, associate professor, Carleton University; co-author of *Policing Indigenous Movements: Dissent and the Security State*

“In this fascinating and well-researched book, Dennis Gruending pulls open Cold War curtains to detail the life of an RCMP informant focused on catching perceived subversives instead of actual ‘criminals.’ Too often, Cold War tales of espionage and surveillance have focused on what the other side did to us. *A Communist for the RCMP* chronicles what we did to ourselves over decades in the name of anti-communism. In the eternal struggle for civil liberties, Gruending exposes what the state is prepared to do against those who peacefully challenge the status quo.”

Steve Hewitt, associate professor, Department of History, University of Birmingham; author of *Snitch: A History of the Modern Intelligence Informer*

“*A Communist for the RCMP* makes a compelling and timely contribution to our understanding of police surveillance in Canada. Gruending’s detailed account of RCMP informant Frank Hadesbeck’s life tells the story of Canada’s nefarious and disruptive surveillance practices. In the process, and given the ease with which the state and corporations monitor our lives and intimate habits today, we are reminded, if we needed it, that ‘Big Brother’ is still watching.”

David Austin, author of *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal*

“The RCMP monitored the activities of tens of thousands of ordinary Canadians during the twentieth century, but we know little about how and why they did so. Gruending shares the story of Frank Hadesbeck, an informant who capitalized on his credibility as a Spanish Civil War veteran to infiltrate communist, socialist, and labour movements for over thirty years. At a time when we are all increasingly aware of being surveilled, this book offers fascinating insight into the motivations and operations of one of those who watched.”

Lesley Wood, associate professor, Department of Sociology, York University; author of *Crisis and Control: The Militarization of Protest Policing*

“*A Communist for the RCMP* by Dennis Gruending is an amazing exploration of the RCMP recruitment of Frank Hadesbeck, a Spanish Civil War veteran, as a paid informant told to join the Communist Party. Aside from decades of spying on the CP he also did surveillance work on union, anti-war, and Indigenous activists. Hadesbeck’s secret notes make visible the organization of broad ranging security investigations of the Left and social movements by the RCMP.”

Gary Kinsman, author of *The Regulation of Desire: Queer Histories, Queer Struggles*; co-author of *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*

“In the gripping style of a spy novel, Gruending recounts the rich story of Frank Hadesbeck’s life as an informant for the RCMP. Through a narrative of Hadesbeck’s surveillance of communists, trade unionists, academics, Indigenous leaders, and others, we learn of the disturbing breadth of the RCMP’s spying program. This story seems especially resonant at a time when the RCMP and CSIS—not having fully reckoned with this sordid past—are confronted with accusations of spying on Muslim communities and Indigenous activists, while also gaining expanded authority to protect the public against white supremacist violence.”

Fahad Ahmad, assistant professor, Department of Criminology, Toronto Metropolitan University

“Gruending’s biography of long-time RCMP informant Frank Hadesbeck is ground-breaking. Although we already know much about the force’s use of informants and spies, never before have we seen their work from the ground up. Here we have a mole’s eye view, provided through the notes Hadesbeck secretly took and kept—against his handlers’ explicit orders—from 1941 to the mid- 1970s. We also get to see how the Mounties cast their net for ‘dangerous’ individuals and movements well beyond the Communist Party. Virtually every social movement participant who dared question the status quo was treated as a potential enemy of the state (including those who advocated for medicare) and ended up on the force’s ‘Watch-out lists.’ This book is an eye-opening exploration of just how casually our security services violate the privacy and civil rights of Canadians.”

Jim Mochoruk, professor, Department of History, University of North Dakota

“*A Communist for the RCMP* is a stark reminder and a cautionary tale for the present. It reveals how when searching for actual threats in the Cold War, forces were influenced by confirmation bias, accepted the sole word of an informant, and targeted individuals on the basis of their political beliefs —these are not strategies we wanted then or want now from our domestic security services.”

Dennis Molinaro, Ontario Tech University

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Dennis Gruending

Between the Lines
Toronto

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For our grandchildren
Solomon & Alma
Rémi, Olivier & Marceau

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FOREWORD

Sometime in 2021, the details are a bit vague, I received a message from Glenn Wright, a former classmate and later archivist at Library and Archives Canada and, subsequently, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, asking if I'd chat with Dennis Gruending, an author, former journalist, and briefly a New Democratic Party member of Parliament. Gruending was working on a book manuscript dealing with the RCMP Security Service, a subject I had spent almost forty years researching, and therefore wanted to discuss his draft. I agreed and shortly after chatted with Dennis about his surprising discovery of the papers of an RCMP secret agent or informant. That telephone discussion commenced a relationship initiated thanks to Glenn's intervention that allowed me to offer Dennis aid for the project that culminated in this important book.

So, why is this book important? While there have been several journalistic and scholarly accounts of various aspects of the Security Service since the 1970s, direct access to and evidence from RCMP spies has been almost non-existent. The revelations of Security Service "dirty tricks," which led to the McDonald and Keable Commissions and ultimately to the creation of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in 1984, revealed much about RCMP spying and worse but remained distant from the agents run by the Security Service and its predecessors in the force from the First World War until 1984. The identity of undercover agents and other informants remained the precious stone in the spy agency's opaque and secret jewel box. Hence Frank Hadesbeck's biography, pieced together here meticulously by Gruending, stands almost unique in the Canadian literature of domestic spying.

I'll leave the details of Hadesbeck's life to Gruending's well-written and impressively researched pages, but the specificity of the reconstruction of this one informant's life provides insights into Security Service tactics generally found only in spy fiction. The agent's willingness after infiltrating the Communist Party to do the dogsbody's work of collecting mail, serving as the local literature agent, maintaining membership lists, and the other nitty-gritty office tasks often avoided by others provided the detailed data sought by his handlers for some thirty-five years. The finely grained specifics of meetings with handlers, payments and other emoluments including jobs and access to housing under questionable claims, explanations of categories of "suspects" (members; members-at-large, i.e., secret members; fellow travellers; contributors; sympathizers), evidence of simultaneous collusion with right-wing labour and management to hinder industrial union efforts in meat packing during the Second World War, and the wide array of individuals on "Watch Out lists" all give readers details previously little understood. Similarly, the creative reconstruction of Hadesbeck's motives, initially for agreeing to spy in 1941 and much later in the 1980s for exposing the Security Service, is reminiscent of John le Carré at his best.

Equally revelatory are the accounts of the RCMP handlers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Life for the handlers, sometimes regular Mounties and at other times Security Service members, featured a boring array of dingy motel meetings complete with steaks and booze, cash payments, and briefings on watch lists while gathering purloined material on Communist Party members including literature and mail, as well as on a much wider array of leftists of all stripes. The ever-vigilant Hadesbeck noted occasional questionable Mountie behaviour among his handlers involving expense accounts and other minor transgressions.

The array of people of interest to the Security Service went well beyond Communist Party of Canada members or even alleged Communist Party front groups. Here Saskatchewan native Gruending is at home because the world of that province's left from late in the Tommy Douglas era into the 1960s and 1970s is familiar terrain for him. The Security Service's overt opposition to medicare and its suspicions concerning Douglas have been discussed before, but never in the detail provided here. The ominous surveillance of activists (and others) from the peace, women's, labour, farm,

Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and human rights movements, as well as clergy, students, and academics add specific detail to the more general accounts of such abuses in other literature.

There are two major political points to be made arising from this courageous account of Security Service spying. The first is to note again the dearth in the literature of material obtained directly from agents. The sparseness of such evidence stems from the failures of the Canadian access to information process. Much has been written elsewhere on this subject. Still, the ongoing failure by any government to reform the moribund system continues to deprive Canadians of their right to access the historical record, which in turn would allow citizens the opportunity to make democratic assessments of the ongoing claims of intelligence agencies for more secrecy and increased powers. How can any of us make such necessary assessments when the files remain closed, seemingly in perpetuity? And make no mistake, Canada is among the worst of any so-called democratic state in its archival practices. One should also point out that political fears of whistleblowing are such that the history of these materials is marred by the refusal of an academic in the 1980s to co-operate in their publication and more recently by the failure of a Canadian university press to risk publishing this volume. Much credit to the author and to the publisher, Between the Lines, for seeing this project through to completion.

The second political point, and one the author makes strongly, is that such transgressions by Canadian intelligence agencies are not simply phenomena of the twentieth century. In only too familiar ways, the RCMP that opposed medicare (and every other progressive social and political advance) now defends resource companies and encroaches on the human rights of environmental and Indigenous activists. The defence of the capitalist status quo remains its core rationale. Similarly, despite the extraordinary exposés of human rights abuses by Five Eyes partners in the United States (FBI, CIA, and National Security Agency) and the United Kingdom (MI5, MI6, and Government Communications Headquarters), their Canadian equivalents (RCMP, CSIS, and Communications Security Establishment) escape similar levels of historical scrutiny and continue to support the global imperial projects of initially the UK and later the US. Gruending merits our warmest accolades for bringing Hadesbeck’s

narrative of his thirty-five years as an RCMP informant to Canadians' attention.

Gregory S. Kealey, Emeritus Professor of History, University of New Brunswick

PREFACE

Otto Driedger first met Frank Hadesbeck in 1987. Driedger was dean of the University of Regina's Faculty of Social Work. A young friend of his named Al Dyck, who attended the university, had a part-time job visiting older men who lived alone. Eighty-year-old Frank Hadesbeck was one of them. Hadesbeck was a good-looking man, if considerably overweight for a frame of five feet, seven inches. He lived in a modest one-bedroom suite in a publicly owned Regina seniors' complex. Hadesbeck was at first wary, but eventually he relaxed and became talkative. He had a story to tell that Dyck thought would be of interest to Driedger, and it was. The two men met on several occasions.

Hadesbeck had fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War against General Francisco Franco, who had staged a coup with the help of Hitler and Mussolini against the democratically elected government. Hadesbeck's time in Spain was arresting but not unique; about sixteen hundred Canadians had volunteered to fight in that conflict. It was what he did after the war that seemed too far-fetched to believe. Hadesbeck was recruited by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Security Service as a paid informant who infiltrated the Communist Party over a span of thirty-five years.

The RCMP and Canada's government had an abiding fear of communism. Their obsession began with the Russian Revolution in 1917 and was magnified during the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. It continued into the Great Depression, during the Second World War, and throughout the Cold War. During those years, the RCMP infiltrated the Communist Party and spied upon its members. But the force also extended that surveillance to anyone who exhibited progressive tendencies. A royal

commission into RCMP wrongdoing led by Justice David McDonald discovered that the Security Service had opened files on over eight hundred thousand individuals and organizations between 1919 and 1979.[1] That is an astonishing number more consistent with a police state than a mature democracy.

The RCMP used a variety of methods to conduct surveillance, such as intercepting mail, wiretapping phones, and planting listening devices. Those procedures were difficult, time-consuming, and expensive, and at times involved having to receive permission from senior politicians. For that reason, informants remained the most effective surveillance tool available. They were especially valuable if they could penetrate the Communist Party. Frank Hadesbeck was one who did.

Hadesbeck's story might have appeared to be a tall tale, except that he provided Driedger with a stack of documents. Defying every warning given to him by his RCMP handlers, Hadesbeck had kept notes. His files contained the names of hundreds of people on so-called Watch Out lists, "persons of interest" to the RCMP. The files also described in detail how and when Hadesbeck was recruited, how he operated as an agent, who his handlers were and how he related to them, and eventually what he thought about the ethics and wisdom of his double life.

Hadesbeck was also a frustrated author. In his solitary retirement, he wrote and rewrote notes describing his experiences. He hoped that Driedger would help him to polish the story and have it published. "What else do you need to know?" Hadesbeck asked Driedger in a recorded interview when they met late in 1987. "If we had a book out now it would sell like hotcakes."[2]

Driedger was interested. He took away a trove of papers, photocopied them, and returned them to Hadesbeck. But eventually, after checking with an RCMP acquaintance, he decided against the project. Long before Hadesbeck died in 2006, they had lost contact, but Driedger still had the files. He was, during my time in Regina, a friendly acquaintance, and we are distantly related through marriage. In 2019, Driedger contacted me in Ottawa, where I now live. He was culling his files. He no longer wanted the Hadesbeck material but did not want to throw it away. He described what he had and asked if I wanted it. I did and he provided me with a banker's box filled with papers. I was intrigued by what I read.

Hadesbeck was no Kim Philby. He was but one of many human sources deployed by the Security Service in cities and towns across Canada. The informants in any location could only guess what went on elsewhere, and they did not know how the RCMP used the intelligence it collected. Despite that caveat, Hadesbeck's story provides a rare insight into how the Security Service operated on a day-to-day basis, and into how the RCMP organized itself to undertake those efforts.

The RCMP has always guarded jealously against the release of any information about its sources, even decades after events occurred. I asked for Hadesbeck's file but was told in a letter from an official in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), "Pursuant to subsection 10(2) of the [Access to Information] Act, we can neither confirm nor deny that the records you requested exist."[3] It is almost unheard of for an informant to break the silence, to take the leap, to go public. Frank Hadesbeck wanted to do that, but he was also afraid of the consequences.

The story is one of betrayal at various levels. Hadesbeck habitually betrayed his comrades in the Communist Party. He was also reckless in passing along information about many other people. Often, he implied that they might be party members when they were not. The Security Service betrayed Canadians by casting such a wide net in its surveillance and using that information against ordinary and well-intentioned people. Politicians who guided the process betrayed those whose rights and freedoms were violated in such a cavalier manner.

It is the duty of every government to protect the health and safety of its citizens. At times that involves gathering intelligence and acting upon threats to the public. The crucial questions that arise relate to the intent, the scope, and the nature of those efforts. In their book *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America*, academics Reg Whitaker, Gregory Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby describe the RCMP Security Service as "always on the side of the political/economic status quo, suspicious of those who would challenge the powerful and the wealthy." They say the police were routinely used to reinforce a system they describe as "democratic authoritarianism."[4]

Hadesbeck came to believe that the Security Service had betrayed him as well. He believed they had cast him aside without recognition or the pension that he deserved. He wanted to strike back by making public what

he had hidden away. This is a story of how Frank Hadesbeck was a communist for the RCMP, a story he wanted to tell but never did.

Note re Sources

The material that I received from Otto Driedger remains in my possession, and I have organized it into a private archive whose sections generally correspond to the chapters in this book. In the endnotes, I identify references to this material as FHP (Frank Hadesbeck Personal Papers).

Hadesbeck donated some papers to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (PAS). They comprise just two small boxes of material. I refer to those papers as FHPAS. They contain no information about his work with the RCMP. However, there is a larger collection of Hadesbeck's material that was turned over to the archives years later by a prominent Saskatchewan historian. That material has never been processed but is available for perusal. I refer to those papers as FHPAS (unprocessed).

The RCMP Security Service records are held by Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Some of that material has been released under the *Access to Information Act* (ATIA). These requests were made by various researchers and, once released, the records are available for perusal at the LAC reading room in Ottawa. I also made ATIA requests of my own. I identify these sources in the endnotes.

The RCMP reorganized itself around its security work on numerous occasions.[5] I use the term Security Service throughout to avoid a profusion of names. In 1984, security work was transferred to CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, a civilian-led agency that reports to Parliament. The new agency was tasked with conducting security investigations within Canada related to suspected subversion, terrorism, and foreign espionage and sabotage.

CHAPTER 1

HARDSCRABBLE YOUTH

Frank Hadesbeck's early life was difficult, as were the lives of his parents and grandparents before him.[1] They were all born into a largely German-speaking area called the Banat in southern Hungary, then part of the sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Habsburgs had pushed the Turks back to the south of the Danube River in 1738 and recruited settlers from Germany to act as a human buffer. Many came from a province called Schwabia and came to be known as Swabian Germans. Most of them in Banat were Roman Catholics.

They tended farms around villages with names like Zichydorf and neighbouring Georghausen, but in time their growing population outstripped the land available to them. That led many to emigrate, primarily to the United States and Canada. In the early 1900s, almost two hundred thousand Germans left Hungary, the Hadesbecks among them. The First and Second World Wars, and subsequent conflicts, were not kind to Hungary, nor to the German villages of the Banat. The renamed villages now reside in Serbia, just to the north of Belgrade.[2]

Frank Hadesbeck's father Johann was born in 1863 but was orphaned early. A cholera pandemic that began in the Indian subcontinent spread to Europe and killed tens of thousands of people in what is now Hungary.[3] Johann's parents Kasper and Katharine died within six days of each other in 1873. He was thirty-six years old, and she was forty. Johann was only ten. He, along with his older brother, also named Kasper, were taken in by

villagers but soon they were working as child labourers on farms. Neither of them went to school and they were illiterate.

In 1888, Johann married Margaret Kleisinger in the Banat village of Georghausen. He was twenty-five and she was eighteen. They had seven children prior to emigrating to Canada. Those children were Susanna, Rosalia, John Sebastian, Kasper, Matthew, Katherine, and finally Frank, who was born on May 17, 1906. There is no record to indicate why Johann and Margaret decided to emigrate, but we can safely assume that they were poor and wanted to improve their lives. In November 1906, Johann and the eldest daughter, Susanna, aged sixteen, made their way to Rotterdam. Margaret remained in Hungary with the other children, all aged ten and under. Frank was just six months old.

Johann and his daughter boarded a ship called the *Montrose* for the long transatlantic voyage to Canada. The ship's log describing their arrival bore a stamp saying "NATC Bonus Allowed." That indicated a payment from the Canadian government to the North Atlantic Trading Company, an Amsterdam-based organization. Ottawa provided NATC with a cozy monopoly on promoting immigration from continental Europe and Scandinavia. In return, the company agreed to recruit farmers and farm labourers to Canada, earning a bonus for each settler.[4]

After they arrived in Montreal, Johann and Susanna travelled another three thousand kilometres by rail, across the expanse of Canadian shield in Ontario, and through the prairies in Manitoba and into Saskatchewan. Six months later, in May 1907, Margaret Hadesbeck made a similar arduous journey along with the other six children. They arrived in Quebec City aboard a ship called the *Lake Michigan*. Port authorities mangled their names. Margaret and one of the children were recorded as Gaderspek, while the others were called Gadersfrek. The *Lake Michigan* would later be torpedoed by a German U-boat during the First World War.[5]

The province of Saskatchewan was carved out of the North-West Territories only two years before the Hadesbecks arrived. The capital was Regina, a small city of six thousand that had been chosen as a townsite on the route of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway. The city's location was determined by well-connected people speculating on land rather than for its setting, which was desolate. Although it is an attractive city today, early

black-and-white photos show a forlorn town on a bald prairie utterly devoid of trees.

The Hadesbecks were among a flood of Europeans who poured into the region beginning in the late 1800s. They met the uncertainty surrounding their recent arrival by locating close to extended family members and people of a similar ethnic background. Johann Hadesbeck's brother Kasper soon arrived in Regina. Several of Margaret Hadesbeck's brothers and her mother came as well, but not her father.

To make way for settlers, the Canadian government forced Indigenous Peoples to sign treaties and move onto reserves. The area around Regina is covered by Treaty Four, signed by the Crown with thirty-five First Nations. Much of what is now Saskatchewan is also homeland to Métis people. In 1885 the Canadian government crushed their resistance further to the north at Batoche. Métis leader Louis Riel was tried for treason and hanged in Regina in November of that year.

The Hadesbecks may have known little or nothing about that violent history, even though it had occurred just a few years before they arrived. On the other hand, they may have had reason to know. After Riel was hanged, there was a funeral mass for him in St. Mary's Roman Catholic church in Regina. Riel was buried there briefly, before his remains were removed to St. Boniface, Manitoba. The Hadesbecks, as Catholics, would have attended St. Mary's, the only Catholic church in Regina at that time.[6]

If Johann and his family were looking for a charmed new life in Canada, they did not find it. Margaret Hadesbeck died in Regina in December 1910, at age forty-one, only three years after the family arrived. By then a teenaged daughter, Rosalia, had died as well. An eighth child named Joseph, born in Saskatchewan, died as an infant in 1909. Susanna, the eldest daughter who had travelled to Canada with Johann in 1906, was by 1910 married to a fellow Swabian German named Frank Ritter.

The census for 1916 showed Johann living at Aylesbury, a farming area to the north of Regina, with his two youngest children, Katherine, aged twelve, and Frank, who was ten. Johann was listed as a fifty-three-year-old widower who became a citizen in 1911. The census reported that he was a Catholic who spoke German, but neither English nor French. He could not read or write. He was described as a farmer.[7]

Johann died in Regina in December 1917 at age fifty-four. He left no will so the courts appointed a trust company to define his assets and administer an estate valued at three thousand dollars in personal property and land. The amount was divided among his seven surviving children.[8]

Frank, who was eleven years old, became an orphan at about the same age as his father had forty-five years earlier. Frank had attended school for only a few years. Later in life, he recalled that he was dyslexic, had trouble writing, and wet the bed. Following his father's death, he worked for a time on an uncle's farm in return for food, lodging, and clothing. After that he worked on a farm near Aylesbury. Much later Frank Hadesbeck described his employment conditions to Otto Driedger as harsh. Frank's sister Katherine was working nearby as a maid.

Their older brother Matthew was by then living in Clinton, Iowa, although he did not become an American citizen until years later. In 1919, Matthew and Frank's other two brothers, John S. and Kasper, still living in Saskatchewan, decided to rescue their younger siblings and take them to Iowa.[9] The US Federal Census for 1920 described sixteen-year-old Katherine as a chambermaid in a hotel. Within a few months of her arrival, she married John Kropp, who was twenty years older. The 1920 census showed fourteen-year-old Frank living with Matthew, who was described as a machinist.[10]

Frank Hadesbeck spent most of the next decade in the US, although he moved between the two countries on several occasions. His entry in 1919 may not have been recorded, but in 1923 and again in 1924 he entered the US at Detroit, where his newly married sister Katherine and her husband had relocated. For much of the decade, he worked at a profuse number of jobs. A list assembled much later by a niece showed him holding twenty-five jobs over six years.[11] He worked on cattle and sheep ranches, most often in the high plains of southern Wyoming, but he also performed various jobs in North Dakota, Washington State, and Oregon.

In early January 1926, Hadesbeck made a Declaration of Intention in Omaha, Nebraska, to become an American citizen. He was described in the document as a ranch hand. He was five feet, seven inches tall and weighed 157 pounds. His hair was light brown, his eyes blue. He had a scar under his right eye but there was no explanation of how he received it. He made the standard declaration that he was neither an anarchist nor a polygamist, and

that he planned to become a citizen and to reside permanently in the US. He provided as his residence the Arcade Hotel in Omaha. He gave 1904 as his date of birth, although it was really 1906, and he said erroneously that his birthplace was Regina, Saskatchewan, rather than Hungary.[12]

Frank Hadesbeck on a ranch in Wyoming, circa 1928. Frank Hadesbeck Personal Papers.

A brief handwritten note at the top of his naturalization form in Omaha reads “Army Enlistment.” Documents at the National Personnel Records Center of the US military confirm that Hadesbeck enlisted in Omaha. The record also provides interesting details about his brief and inglorious career in the army. Hadesbeck was sent from Omaha to a field artillery unit at Camp Lewis in Washington State in January 1926. He was on the muster roll there as a private between January and May. The military records show that he was reported AWOL (absent without leave) as of May 3, 1926. By June, the muster roll was describing him as a deserter.[13]

Then, bizarrely, he re-enlisted in December 1926 at the barracks in Vancouver, Washington, as Donald Lamraux, a pseudonym that was to surface again many years later in Canada. He was posted to a field artillery unit at Fort Winfield Scott in California, where his ruse was discovered within a few weeks. Military records indicate that he was to be sentenced to

a year of hard labour and dishonourably discharged. For reasons that are not made clear, it appears that he avoided that sentence. A document regarding Hadesbeck over the name of a Lieutenant Colonel L. S. Morey simply says "Dropped."[14]

Hadesbeck was out of the military by April 1927, and spent the summer working on ranches in Nevada and Wyoming. By November, he was in Chicago, where he made a down payment of seventy-five dollars toward flying lessons and aircraft mechanics with a company called Aviation Service and Transport. The application showed him as living in a Chicago hotel called the Mohawk. There is no record in his papers to indicate that he completed the course.[15] In January 1928, he worked briefly for the Pinkerton Detective Patrol, but by the next month he was back on ranches in Wyoming. He alternated between Wyoming and Chicago on several occasions before returning to Canada in July 1929, entering at Coutts, Alberta.

By then, Hadesbeck had spent most of the ten years in the US. At Coutts, he listed his last American address as Lusk, Wyoming, where had been working on a cattle ranch. He abandoned his US domicile and was admitted to Canada as an immigrant, for a second time, at age twenty-three. Asked for his next of kin in the US, he named his sister Katherine Kropp in Detroit. For his destination in Canada, he gave the name of Frank Ritter, his sister Susanna's husband in Regina. Hadesbeck was described in the document as a farm labourer who had $130 on his person.[16]

His return to Canada was just prior to the Great Depression, and he began working on an uncle's farm near Regina. He later took a series of jobs in the city. In 1931, *Henderson's Directory*—a publication that provided details annually about individuals, households, and businesses starting around 1880 and focusing mainly upon Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan—described Hadesbeck as working at a service station. In Regina, Hadesbeck lived in Germantown, a neighbourhood that was home to many people described by a federal census as "foreign-born." About half of them were Germans, while others included a mix of ethnic groups from central Europe. A report at the time described their houses as being poorly built and overcrowded. More than half had no sewer or water connections.[17]

For several years in the 1930s, Hadesbeck held a variety of jobs in or near Regina. Then in 1934 he went to Taber, Alberta, where he worked on

nearby farms and ranches. Farm labour could be seasonal, and the work was often short term, but his frequent changes of employment in both the US and Canada owed as much to his personality as to an uncertain labour market. Hadesbeck was peripatetic, always on the move, often on an almost monthly basis. Orphaned at age eleven, uneducated in any formal sense, and left to the vagaries of an agrarian economy where the pay was meagre and the working conditions harsh, he would have confronted his future with some apprehension. They were precarious times.

The US stock market crashed in 1929 and North America was hurled into the Great Depression. The Depression struck with ferocity in Western Canada, where it was accompanied by a prolonged drought of biblical proportions. Between 1929 and 1933, the net income in prairie agriculture fell by 94 percent.[18] There was little work and less hope. Hordes of young men hitched rides on freight cars hoping they might find employment somewhere along the line. The system had failed them and almost everyone else. Soup kitchens and homelessness were the order of the day. People were desperate and began to question the very foundations of the economic system. Two new political movements, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and Social Credit, arose in Western Canada in the 1930s. Both demanded that government play a much larger role in the economy.

The Communist Party of Canada, created in 1921, provided another option. Some ardently believed that communism offered a real alternative and that it was being realized in the Soviet Union. The United States, France, and other countries had had their revolutions, and now Russia had as well. The czarist regime, based upon the medieval divine right of kings, was an antiquated disaster that deserved to be removed, but ultimately Russia's Communist Party failed to deliver on its utopian ideals. Lenin amassed power and introduced terror. Stalin would orchestrate famine, show trials, mass murder, and the gulags.

In Canada, the Depression-era membership in the Communist Party reached sixteen thousand in 1939 when the party was on the front line of struggles for working people. Its membership was to peak at about twenty thousand in 1946, although there is some doubt how many people described as members paid dues.[19] The party was effective in organizing the unemployed and workers in a variety of industries, including mining,

logging, and textiles. In 1935, men from the camps in British Columbia began to ride the rails toward Ottawa demanding better wages and healthier working conditions. The On-to-Ottawa Trek attracted growing numbers of participants, not to mention community support along the way.

Prime Minister R. B. Bennett decided to halt the trekkers in Regina. There, on July 1, 1935, the RCMP and other police wielding truncheons moved in on horseback to arrest leaders as they were speaking to a peaceful public rally. In the ensuing melee two people died, hundreds were injured, and the city incurred thousands of dollars in damages. Bennett had promised to crush protest movements under “the iron heel of ruthlessness,” and he did so in Regina.

Frank Hadesbeck was far from Regina in July 1935, working on a sheep ranch near Lethbridge, Alberta.[20] In December 1936, he surfaced in Calgary as the secretary of a group called the Unemployed Collective Farm Association. He wrote to Premier William Aberhart, whose Social Credit party had swept to power the previous year. Hadesbeck proposed that the provincial government provide land grants on a lease basis to six hundred single unemployed men organized into groups of fifty in dispersed farming areas. He also asked for financial assistance during their first three years on the land.[21]

In a flyer over his signature, aimed at people in Calgary, Hadesbeck asked for donations to allow the group to continue with its work. The flyer said the men wanted “to prove that [they] can become self-supporting, and not be faced with the same routine of soup kitchens and work camps year after year.” Hadesbeck also wrote: “We are not connected with the Single Unemployed Association.”[22] That was an attempt to distance his group from another, which was communist influenced. Hadesbeck claimed to represent the Unemployed Collective Farm Association, but I could find no independent record indicating such an organization existed. The exercise was likely ill-defined and poorly executed.

The premier was not interested in Hadesbeck’s proposal. His private secretary replied curtly, saying, “Mr. Aberhart was not inclined to look upon the proposal with favour.”[23] Hadesbeck made a similar written request to a priest in Ontario who led a group called Catholic Action in Rural Districts. Rev. Francis McGoey replied to say that while he was sympathetic, he felt

the proposal would not get government support because it would be too expensive. He suggested that a more modest project might succeed.[24]

Early in 1937, Hadesbeck spent several months in a farm placement program, in which single men were paid five dollars a month for their labour. The program ended with the harvest, after which the men were left to fend for themselves.[25] In June 1937, he worked briefly for Johnson Brothers Lumber at MacLeod, Alberta. The company used an invoice sheet to draft a crude contract with Hadesbeck. He was to receive twenty-five cents an hour but to pay a dollar per day for meals and accommodation. He had to agree, as well, that he was not protected under the *Compensation Act*, which presumably dealt with injuries while on the job.[26] In the fall, Hadesbeck found work for three weeks in the sugar beet harvest at Taber. As the weather turned cold in December, he gave up on Canada and left to fight on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

CHAPTER 2

THE SPANISH COUP

Early on the morning of July 18, 1936, General Francisco Franco broadcast a manifesto from the Canary Islands off the coast of Spain's protectorate in Morocco. He proclaimed that a rebellion against the democratically elected Republican government had begun on the previous day. In an attempted military coup, mutinous soldiers staged uprisings on the mainland and Franco then flew to Morocco, quickly taking control of the army garrisoned there. Germany's chancellor Adolf Hitler had obligingly provided twenty transport aircraft and warships to help ferry and protect fifteen thousand troops in their crossing from Morocco to mainland Spain.[1]

Franco was a dour introvert who had been raised in a military family in late-nineteenth-century Spain. He was close to his mother, an affluent, pious, and conservative Catholic. As a young soldier, Franco was engaged in brutal colonial wars to crush the Berber tribes in Morocco. By 1923, he commanded the Spanish Foreign Legion. In 1926, at age thirty-three, he was a brigadier general. Despite its colonial presence in Morocco, the glory days of Spain's empire were by the 1930s only a distant memory. The country had become one of the poorest in Europe. It was ruled by an entrenched class of large landowners with the support of an archconservative Catholic church. These groups, along with a segment of the army, saw themselves as the defenders of Spain's long-lost grandeur.[2]

There had long been a desire for change in the country. In 1931, the unpopular king was forced to abdicate in favour of the Second Republic.

The left-leaning government had a strong labour component and an ideological spectrum that included liberals, social democrats, socialists, anarchists, and communists. The government introduced reforms, including land redistribution, an eight-hour workday, and a secularization of church schools and charities. This antagonized landowners and the clergy, who joined in a right-wing alliance with monarchists, conservatives, and outright fascists. These groups opposed the government's progressive changes, which they abhorred. At the same time, there was dissatisfaction on the left. Government attempts at reform did not deliver enough to satisfy landless farm labourers, peasants, and urban workers.

A right-wing coalition won power in the elections of 1933, which led the extra-parliamentary left to organize a general strike. In 1934, General Franco led the military in suppressing a miners' strike in northern Spain. Two years later, a left-leaning Popular Front narrowly won the government in new elections. It removed Franco from the general army staff and sent him to a command post in the distant Canary Islands from where he plotted the coup. Franco believed that he could seize power quickly, but he was wrong. Pockets of the citizenry armed themselves and organized militias.

The civil war began over local and national questions, but foreign intervention was instrumental in its execution and outcome. By November 1936, the first fighters of the International Brigades had arrived to support the Republicans. Eventually they numbered thirty-five thousand. They were outnumbered by the combined forces of the mutinous Spanish army, bolstered by seventy-six thousand Italian troops and pilots, and a German Condor Legion of seventeen thousand aircrew and artillerymen.[3]

Hitler and Mussolini used their support for Franco as a dress rehearsal for the wars they were planning. They tested new weaponry and military tactics, including indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations. They justified their involvement as a fight against communism, although communists were in a minority in the Republican coalition.

Despite the ominous threat of fascism, Great Britain proposed a non-intervention agreement in which the great powers would not send aid or arms to either side in the war. That agreement was endorsed in September 1936, but the Germans and Italians promptly broke it, reinforcing the coup plotters with planes, pilots, heavy weapons, and troops.

Canadian journalist Matthew Halton covered the war for the *Toronto Star* and later became a war correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In his book *Ten Years to Alamein,* he described the conduct of Britain and France as “one of the most cynical infamies in history.” Halton claimed that the British government made no secret of its hope for a fascist victory in Spain.[4]

The Soviet Union responded to the failed arms embargo by providing the Republicans with a more limited support in arms and munitions, and about two thousand military advisers and officers. Despite that modest support, communists came to wield an outsized influence upon the Spanish government and its military campaign because they recruited fighters for the International Brigades.

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the foreign policy of the Soviet Communist Party had been one of opposition to working with socialists and progressives in other countries. The Soviets believed that in Marxism-Leninism they had a unique formula for creating a more humane society, and they were in no mood to share power. The Communist International (Comintern) was housed in Moscow, and parties in other countries were expected to follow instructions.

That changed with the rise in Europe of fascism, with its virulent anti-communism. Confronted by that threat, the Comintern pivoted in 1935 to call for a united front. Communists would engage progressives in any country and of practically any description in the struggle against fascism. In 1936, the call went out to mobilize a Popular Front against Franco and to assist the Republicans in Spain.

In Canada, there was a good deal of sympathy for the Republicans. When Dr. Norman Bethune, who had been in Spain, returned home in 1937, his speaking tour drew overflowing crowds. The common front included people from various persuasions, most significantly the Communist Party, but also the CCF and some progressive Liberals.

Most genuinely feared the rise of fascism, an ideology they loathed. They also believed that were fighting to preserve Spanish democracy after a military coup, a belief that applied to most of the Canadian communist recruits as well. The revolution in Russia had overthrown a czarist autocracy and it had improved the lives and civic participation of ordinary people. It was only later that the country veered into totalitarianism. In

1936, that trajectory was not well known beyond Soviet borders, and the USSR remained a beacon for many who volunteered to fight in Spain.[5]

The first of an eventual 1,650 Canadian volunteers began to arrive in Spain in December 1936. In his book *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, Michael Petrou writes that about three-quarters of them were members of the Communist Party. Most had joined in the mid-1930s, during the depths of the Great Depression. The party was strongest among blue-collar workers in the forests, lumber camps, mines, and mills of the hinterland.[6]

Petrou estimates that 80 percent of the volunteers were first-generation immigrants, including Ukrainians, Finns, and Hungarians.[7] Few of them had an intellectual grounding in Marxism, even if they were party members. Most would not have been familiar with the Comintern or even the Canadian party's publications. Their politics emerged from their experience in the Great Depression, where they had been perceived as outsiders and people of little worth. The party gave them a cause, an explanation, and a dignity at odds with their daily existence as exploited or unemployed workers.

A trove of Security Service documents at Library and Archives Canada shows that the RCMP had been keeping a close eye on the recruitment of volunteers. A note from the commanding officer in Saskatchewan to the RCMP commissioner in December 1937 described the men going to Spain in a negative light. "Our experience in Saskatchewan," he wrote, "is that the vast majority of these men have been drawn from the transient and unemployed elements, men who are disgruntled and have become discouraged, whose mental outlook has become warped and unstable owing to the restlessness attendant on their mode of life during the past few years."[8] Tellingly, the officer did not mention the stock market crash and the system failure that was the cause of widespread unemployment and deprivation.

Much of the RCMP surveillance in the interwar period was led by an officer named Charles Rivett-Carnac, who immigrated to Canada from England as a young man in 1923 and immediately joined the force. During a miners' strike in Bienfait, Saskatchewan, in 1931, Rivett-Carnac placed

machine guns at strategic locations throughout the small town of five hundred to intimidate the strikers.[9] He was later promoted through the ranks and eventually served briefly as the RCMP's chief commissioner in 1959–60.

In the 1930s, Rivett-Carnac warned darkly about what would happen when men recruited to the Spanish cause returned from the war. He also wrote a six-page letter to Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King arguing that capitalism had more to fear from communism than it did from fascism: "The main point I wish to make in this connection is that while the Communist program embodies the destruction of the state apparatus of the government and the setting up of a new economic order, the Nazi program which has been brought into being in Germany has retained the principles of the old system to the extent that a modified form of capitalism now exists in that country."[10] Rivett-Carnac believed the evidence that the RCMP was gathering should be used to prevent anyone volunteering to fight in Spain from coming back to Canada at the war's end.

Prime Minister King met Hitler in Berlin in June 1937, a year after Franco's mutiny. King came away impressed, if not infatuated, with the Führer.[11] Back at home, he knew there was some sympathy toward Franco and his allies, known as the Nationalists, particularly in Quebec, where the Catholic church was a powerful actor. The Republican government in Spain had nationalized church property and there were also attacks on, even murders of, clergy. The Vatican's representative to Canada described Franco and his troops as "an army of heroes" and "Christ's militia." In the 1936 provincial election, Maurice Duplessis campaigned on an anti-communist platform and won in a landslide with almost 60 percent of the vote. Once elected the Duplessis government introduced the so-called Padlock Law, which made it illegal for anyone to promote communism. The definitions were loose for what constituted either promotion or communism.[12]

King was more concerned about national unity at home than the emerging threat of fascism abroad, a threat that he believed was overblown. He did not want Canadians going to fight in Spain. His government passed the *Canadian Foreign Enlistment Act* in April 1937. The legislation made it illegal for any Canadian not in the armed forces to volunteer for a foreign war, but its target clearly was those volunteering to fight in Spain.[13] In an

odd and telling euphemism, the volunteers were often described in Canada and elsewhere as “premature anti-fascists.”[14]

CHAPTER 3
FIGHTING FASCISM

There was talk of the Spanish war in 1936–37 among young men in the pool halls and cafés of Taber and Lethbridge. The region south of Calgary, known for its coal mines, had a radical labour tradition and eventually sent more than its share of volunteers to fight with the Republicans. Most went for political or humanitarian reasons, but for many that was likely mingled with a sense of adventure. Motive is often difficult to ascribe. Hadesbeck was among the minority of recruits who were not Communist Party members.

Asked in an interview many years later whether in 1937 he had any political leanings, Hadesbeck answered: “None whatever. Naturally, I hung around with a bunch of other unemployed at that time. The question came up that they were looking for volunteers, and the pay was supposed to be good and conditions fairly good, and one thing led to another. I blame most of it on conditions in Canada for me going over because I wanted to better myself and these people offered a way out.”[1]

Hadesbeck was naive to believe that he would improve his lot in a war zone, but the prospect of fighting in Spain was more alluring for him than working on a sheep ranch or being an unemployed drifter. In 1937 alone, he had endured a variety of dead-end jobs and was twice forced onto relief. He was tired of being kicked around and despaired of finding work and security.

He came to the attention of the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, a group of Canadian socialists and communists. The committee, likely unaware of Hadesbeck’s lack of conviction, arranged for him to get a

passport and paid his way from Lethbridge to Calgary, then by train to Toronto. On December 23, 1937, he left Toronto by train for New York City. He was given some cheap luggage and told to pose as a tourist.

Hadesbeck kept a diary throughout, and its early pages read like a travelogue.[2] As his train approached New York, he wrote that he could not tell where one town began and the other left off. He was impressed by the billboards advertising everything from high-class hotels to women's bathing suits. Hadesbeck sailed on the SS *President Roosevelt* bound for France, but his enthusiasm was tempered once the ship left harbour. He became seasick and remained so for much of the nine-day voyage to France.

Within a few days on the boat, Hadesbeck was approached by a contact who gave him some cash to reinforce the ruse that he was a tourist on his way to Paris. He soon began to recognize others travelling on a similar mission. He travelled in third class. The deck was cluttered with greasy machinery and, while walking on board, he was thrown against it as the ship rolled in the waves. Third-class passengers were not invited to the ship's religious services or other social events. Hadesbeck and his cabinmates threw their own New Year's Eve party along with four female passengers. They trashed their room, and an angry ship's steward accused them of being "reds" on their way to fight in Spain.

On January 2, Hadesbeck arrived in the French port of Le Havre. He was waved through customs and took a train to Paris. He stayed for a few days in a hotel called the Montana, where his contact arrived to retrieve the money that Hadesbeck had been carrying. The city filled Hadesbeck with awe. He wrote in his diary: "Because I come from a small city in western Canada, the city of Paris held many wonders for me and more so because some of the World's Fair buildings and posters were evident."

On January 8, after a few days in Paris, Hadesbeck travelled by rail with a group of men to a small town in the south of France, and then by bus to near the Spanish border. They were told to take off their street shoes and were given rope-soled canvas shoes called *espadrilles*, which would serve them better on their fourteen-hour march over the Pyrenees.

Hadesbeck described the column of men as stumbling, walking, falling, and even crawling until, footsore and exhausted, they arrived at a stone house on the Spanish side. He described the experience to an interviewer

years later. “It was bitterly cold, and the wind was blowing in the mountains. We went over the mountains, over a pass.”[3]

On January 9, the men were welcomed by a friendly Spanish border patrol and taken by army trucks to the massive eighteenth-century Sant Ferran fortification in the Spanish town of Figueras, near the Mediterranean coast to the north of Barcelona. They were given a meal, blankets, and straw mattresses on which they were to spend several uncomfortable nights.

On January 12, they were moved by train at night through Barcelona and then inland to a small city called Albacete for orientation. Hadesbeck balked at giving up his passport to the military authorities but was eventually convinced to do so. He never saw it again. He soon discovered that he was not to receive the training he had expected. He would have to learn on the job. Hadesbeck’s disillusionment set in early.

By January 16, he concluded in his diary that the war was not being conducted well: “Though I have only been in Spain little more than a week, I can readily see why the government forces have not made any gains. Wherever one looks and in every branch of this army there is little evidence of organization.”[4]

On January 26, Hadesbeck was assigned to an anti-aircraft gun crew. He wrote in his diary, “I inquired what I could get into besides the infantry. They said they needed sailors, and they needed drivers and they needed anti-aircraft gunners.” In an interview many years later, he recalled, “During the processing I had to put down whether I had any military training. Having had anti-aircraft training in the American army, everything brightened up right then and there.”[5]

Hadesbeck had been in the US army for only a few months before deserting, which he would not have confessed. But he was able to point to his artillery training, brief as it may have been. To his obvious relief, he was assigned to an anti-aircraft battalion. Such units were deployed behind the front lines of infantry to fire at attacking enemy planes. Nowhere is safe in war, but being in an anti-aircraft battery would have been less dangerous than close-range combat on the front lines.

On January 27, Hadesbeck was sent to a barracks near Valencia, a larger city on the Mediterranean, for training. According to his telling, he was given the choice of serving in a unit where the fighters spoke French, another where they spoke Czech, or a unit that was German speaking. He

chose the latter because he had grown up talking German and retained at least some of the language. Although born in Hungary, he was most often described in documentation related to the war as being German.[6] The battalion took its name from Georgi Dimitrov, a Bulgarian communist who was general secretary of Comintern in Moscow.

Hadesbeck's placement was unusual because early in the war most Canadian volunteers served with Americans as part of the Abraham Lincoln or George Washington brigades. But Canadians lobbied to have their own fighting unit, a request that was granted in July 1937, six months prior to Hadesbeck's arrival. It became known as the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, named after William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau, who had led separate, ill-fated rebellions in 1837 against the British colonial administration in Upper and Lower Canada, respectively. The name was an attempt to provide Canadian fighters with a democratic and patriotic lineage, and to appeal to those at home who might support the struggle in Spain.[7] Hadesbeck was never to serve with the Mac-Paps, as the battalion was known, and he seldom encountered other Canadian fighters until he was about to leave Spain a year later.

On January 29, he was back on a train to Barcelona, 350 kilometres north along the coast. The Dimitrov Battalion was tasked with defending the city against air assaults. When they arrived at the train station late on the afternoon of January 30, Barcelona had just been bombed by Italian planes. There was still smoke rising from buildings, and rescue crews were pulling the dead and injured from the rubble. The Sant Felip Neri church in the city centre had been used as an air-raid shelter for children. The church was levelled by the bombing, burying the children who had sought shelter in its basement. Twenty of them died.[8] Writing in his diary, Hadesbeck was shaken and angry: "To think that there were humans living today that would do this to innocent children and non-combatants, to civilians whose only aim in life is progressive culture, peace and good will towards mankind … a band of paid murderers whose only aim is greed, destruction and rape of peace-loving peoples." In a heavily censored letter sent to his sister, he described the Nationalists as baby killers who rained death from the skies on people who wanted only to live peaceful lives.[9]

Children play today in a Barcelona church courtyard bombed by the Italian air force in 1938. Dennis Gruending photo.

On February 1, still on the outskirts of Barcelona, Hadesbeck was welcomed by members of his new unit. The Dimitrov Battalion was composed mostly of Slavic men, as well as some Germans, Hungarians, and Austrians. They were housed in Montjuïc Castle, a fortress in the mountains overlooking the city and the Mediterranean. The fortification dates back to the 1600s; during the Spanish Civil War it was used for anti-aircraft defence and as a military prison.

By February 7, his unit received orders to load their big guns onto trucks and move toward Teruel, a town in the mountainous Aragon region of eastern Spain. They travelled all night and, as they approached the front, the roads were busy with truck traffic, ambulances, and troops on foot. On February 9, Hadesbeck's position was bombed from the air. "We fired all through the raid and brought down one bomber," he wrote in his diary. "This was my first taste of war, and I must admit I was badly scared though none of the bombs came near the battery." On February 19, they moved closer to Teruel. They were attacked again from the air and several of their men were injured when a bomb struck nearby.

Frank Hadesbeck (centre) loading an anti-aircraft gun in Spain, 1938. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-368.

By this time the civil war had been grinding on for eighteen months. The Republicans had attacked Teruel just prior to Christmas in 1937, as Hadesbeck was heading to Spain. The offensive was intended to force Franco to divert troops that had been attacking Madrid. The Republicans took Teruel but the cost in casualties was high. Almost immediately Franco counterattacked, and a bloody two-month battle ensued before the Nationalists reclaimed the town again on February 21. It was a military turning point in the war. The Republicans, including members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, had their ranks decimated. Their troops were exhausted and running short on guns, ammunition, and supplies.

There was a brief respite for several weeks after the fall of Teruel. On March 13, Hadesbeck wrote in his diary: “I guess that the rebels have shifted their efforts to another front. We haven’t had no action for a long while now.” All of that changed a few days later. The Nationalists had massed tens of thousands of troops, supported by German and Italian aircraft, to push eastward in the Aragon Offensive.

Hadesbeck’s experience during the next few months in 1938 was one of constantly retreating. In fact, that period of the war is popularly known as “the retreats.” The Nationalists pushed eastward toward the Mediterranean, attempting to sever the Republican lines. Hadesbeck described in his diary how the Dimitrov unit was continually loading its large Russian-made artillery pieces onto trucks and moving. The men in the unit slept in their clothes beside their guns on straw mattresses and covered with canvas shelter sheets, ready to roll into trenches they had dug if they were attacked.

The battalion was involved in several pitched battles as the Republicans were pushed back relentlessly toward the Ebro River and Barcelona. On March 16, a frustrated Hadesbeck described the scene at a village called Alcaniz as civilians tried to escape fighting on the eastern front: “The roads were a scramble of humanity, trucks and mule carts as far as the eye could see. It seems all that any people had in mind was to get away from Alcaniz.”

Hadesbeck was upset with the army command. On March 18, he wrote: “This whole retreat was altogether unnecessary had the army put up some good fortifications … they had plenty of time to do so … One would almost think that our leaders don’t care much one way or another if we win or lose.”

The Republicans, including Hadesbeck’s anti-aircraft unit, were bombed incessantly in mid to late March. On March 29, one of the unit’s truck

drivers ran away and Hadesbeck, an experienced driver, took over temporarily. By March 31, he had been on the front line for two months without a break. His unit was near the town of Gandesa, east of Alcaniz and near the coastal road between Barcelona and Valencia. He and four Americans were interviewed by an Associated Press reporter named Robert Okin. The story was carried widely in US and Canadian newspapers. Okin wrote, “The Spanish government’s best troops fought stubbornly today to stem the relentlessly advancing insurgent tide along two main roads to the sea.” He described Hadesbeck and the others as tough, well-trained, and determined.[10]

Okin also witnessed the desperate flight of civilians: “The exodus along the Gandesa-Tortosa road still is in full swing by donkey carts loaded with mattresses and hastily gathered household belongings upon which are usually perched the old and youngest members of the family.”

On April 7, during a day of intense bombing, one of the Dimitrov Battalion’s cannoneers leapt into a trench and refused to come out. Hadesbeck was told to take his place, loading shells into the big guns. Later, he graduated to become a gunner, firing at incoming planes. The Nationalist advance was supported by waves of German and Italian planes bombing and strafing the Republican forces. The retreats continued. On April 15, Hadesbeck wrote: “The highway was out last night and now we are cut off from Barcelona. Franco has finally reached the sea. We retreated again turning toward Valencia. If we fall into the hands of Franco, we will meet a very disagreeable death.”

As they retreated, the battalion’s guns were often out of action. At other times there was so little ammunition that the crew had to sit and watch as German planes buzzed overhead and dropped their bombs. On June 10, Hadesbeck wrote: “I don’t know where Franco gets all his planes from. Every time they come over they seem to double in number and stay three times as long.” A few days earlier, Hadesbeck’s big gun burst its barrel while firing a defective Spanish-made shell. He was thrown to the ground. Others in his crew were killed. A Spanish Civil War website refers to Hadesbeck being hospitalized, but he made no mention of that in his diary, and I have found no other documentation to support that claim.[11]

Through it all, Hadesbeck had the usual soldier's complaints about the ineptitude of his commanding officers. He grumbled about the comforts he believed they were receiving, particularly cigarettes and food rations, while rank-and-file soldiers did without. After yet another retreat was ordered in March 1938, he wrote: "I think a good cleanup is necessary in the command of this army if we are going to get anywhere."

Hadesbeck took an immediate dislike to the commissars who accompanied each fighting unit. These were communist political officers whose authority was equal to that of the military commanders. The Communist Party had been instrumental in recruiting and deploying volunteers who formed the International Brigades. The party believed that soldiers had to be politically mature as well as ready to fight. In the party's view, commissars were central to that formation.

In the privacy of his diary, Hadesbeck was contemptuous: "Commissar Danchuk is a joke … If this war is going to be fought with political speeches as this commissar seems to think then I am sure that victory will not be ours as I don't think the fascists waste any time on the political education of their soldiers." He added, sardonically, "However, I am only an anti-fascist and not far enough along politically to understand such guys."

The commissars were responsible to ensure the men received food, clothing, and toiletries, packages from home, and above all, cigarettes. Hadesbeck, in his diary, frequently expressed his suspicion that those precious items were being withheld or hoarded by the commissars for their own enjoyment.

His assessment was noticeably different from that of Victor Hoar, who published a book about the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in 1969. Hoar believed it was important for men to be motivated by political ideas in a war where they faced an opponent with superior weaponry provided by the fascist powers. He wrote: "The most sensitive position in each company, brigade or battalion was that held by the political commissar whose chief function it was to unite the military and political commitments of the soldiers … The commissar also served as a buffer between the harsh discipline and realities of military life, and the men in the ranks. He was a welfare and morale officer as well."[12]

On July 5, the Dimitrov unit was ordered south to the defence of Valencia. They were provided with new Swedish-made guns. When they were near smaller centres, Hadesbeck said, they often stayed near the guns on days off and slept in their trenches. There was often no food to buy in the towns, and most of the men could not talk to locals because of the language barrier. Better to remain with the unit on days off where at least there was food available.

Valencia had more to offer but Hadesbeck's isolation continued. "I can't get a conversation out of one of these Spanish girls," he wrote. "The only ones we here in the battery can catch up with are the ones it takes money to know. But feminine companionship at from one hundred to three hundred pesetas a night is a little high to my way of figuring."

On July 25, the battered Republicans mounted an offensive across the Ebro River. The government needed a military victory if it was to strengthen its negotiating position to end the war. For a brief time, it looked promising. The Nationalists were taken by surprise, but soon their opposition hardened, with help from guns and aircraft provided by the Germans. Hadesbeck, now stationed near Valencia, did not participate in that campaign.

By late July, rumours began to circulate that the international fighters would be withdrawn from Spain. Hadesbeck did not see a way out. "The Mediterranean is blocked and the road to Barcelona is cut off and then there is the cost of returning each of us to our own country." In September 1938, Prime Minister Juan Negrín ordered that the International Brigades be withdrawn. He hoped that his move would force Germany and Italy to remove their troops as well. He was also trying to persuade the Western democracies to end their arms embargo on the Republic, which might allow the defeat of fascism in Spain before it spread farther.[13]

The gamble did not pay off. Germany and Italy were not about to leave the field, and the democracies appeased them. It was only after Hitler later invaded Poland in August 1939 that France, Britain, Canada, and other nations declared war. The United States sat on the sidelines until December 1941, and some American corporations were willing business partners of Hitler and the Nazis until the declaration of war.[14]

CHAPTER 4

STRANDED IN SPAIN

Hadesbeck had his last day at the front on October 22, 1938. Then he experienced a frustrating wait of three months while the Canadian government decided what to do with men who had gone to Spain. Hadesbeck and others were stranded in Valencia and had to be taken to Barcelona by boat. In a town near Barcelona, they met with representatives of the League of Nations, which sent several commissioners to interview potential returnees. Few of the men had passports. They had been forced to surrender them upon arrival in Spain. Canada wanted to protect against having anyone enter the country who had not lived there previously. The government sent a military officer from its immigration office in London to assist in determining who would be allowed in. One of the officer's tricks was to query the men's knowledge about well-known individuals and landmarks.

Hadesbeck's turn to be interviewed came only on December 21. He had been briefed by the Communist Party on how to answer questions, with a warning to say nothing about military preparedness or strength. His diary indicated that the interview was brief, asking only about his birthdate, country of origin, and his citizenship status. Years later in a CBC Radio interview he added another detail. He said that he was able to convince the Canadian official of his truthfulness by providing details about the Calgary Stampede.[1]

The interview that Hadesbeck gave to the League of Nations team was a simple matter compared to a lengthy questionnaire provided to international volunteers by the Communist Party of Spain. One purpose was to decide who among them would be suitable for party work once they returned home. The completed questionnaires were sent to Moscow during or immediately after the Spanish war and remained there in the archives. Shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, an enterprising staff member from Library and Archives Canada travelled to Moscow. He obtained copies of files from Russian archives about the Canadians who fought in Spain. The files are now available in the LAC reading room in Ottawa.[2]

The Communist Party questionnaire asked about the performance of volunteers, as well as their lives and activities prior to arriving in Spain. Early in December, Hadesbeck wrote in his diary about his suspicions. “As I saw it, this questionnaire was really meant to find out whether we were all in favor of Communism.”

The questionnaire, in Spanish, was in typewritten form. In Hadesbeck’s case, the responses were handwritten in German. They were likely provided by a military superior, or the commissar attached to the Dimitrov Battalion. That person’s signature on the questionnaire is illegible.

The questionnaire began as follows: “The leadership committee of the party sees the conduct of the comrade [Hadesbeck] of the battalion [14th Batt] as [good] or [bad].” The handwritten note said “Gut,” which means “good” in German. The questionnaire continued: “This comrade [is] or [is not] a member of the party.” The handwritten note said “Nicht,” or no. Another question asked how well Hadesbeck carried out his tasks as a soldier, and the response was “Gut.” There was a line asking about his personal conduct, and again the handwritten word “Gut” appeared. Another asked about the discipline he exhibited, and the response was “Sehr gut,” or very good.

Finally, there was space for the Dimitrov Brigade’s Communist Party committee to pick one from among several descriptors for Hadesbeck, a kind of multiple-choice option. They chose this one: “a good anti-fascist.” The word “Socialist” was underlined; the word “Communist” was not. The brigade’s judgment of Hadesbeck, in brief, was that he was a good and disciplined soldier, and an anti-fascist, but not a political militant or

member of the Communist Party. The document also described Hadesbeck as having done military service in the US, but as a truck driver, not an anti-aircraft gunner. Hadesbeck would not have shared information with his superiors about his desertion and fraudulent re-enlistment in the US army.

On January 1, 1939, Hadesbeck, still waiting impatiently in Spain, made a final, lengthy entry in his diary. He was frustrated by the wait to go home and skeptical about much of what he had seen: “The fact that the International Brigades have been withdrawn from the front for more than three months now proves that its purpose in Spain was wholly one of political significance … their value in gathering financial and material support when they get home will help Spain more than they themselves could do even at the fronts.”

That was an unduly cynical observation. Negrín believed his only chance at victory was to have all foreign troops and assistance withdrawn, or alternatively, to receive support from the liberal democracies. It was not forthcoming.

Later in January, Hadesbeck was removed from Spain. It was not an easy departure. He subsequently told an interviewer that he and others had to walk to the French border, with an occasional hitched ride along the way. There were thousands of fleeing civilians on the trek as well. Hadesbeck told Otto Driedger that all the while he had his diary strapped to his back. “If the Nationalists had found it they would have thought that’s a spy for sure and they would have lined me up right there.” Hadesbeck must have wanted badly to keep a diary despite the obvious inconvenience. It was a hard-cover, legal-sized ledger. He would have had to tote it with him on marches, in trucks and trains, and in the trenches where he slept beside his big gun when it rained.

Once at the French border, there were League of Nations personnel to smooth the way because none of the returning fighters had a passport. There was a train waiting on the French side to take them to Paris. There they were processed and placed on another train to the English Channel. Hadesbeck said that the Communist Party provided food and support as they moved.

Meanwhile, the RCMP was urging Ottawa to refuse re-entry to the Canadian volunteers. The government rejected that advice but did nothing to help the men return. It was left to the Communist Party, civil organizations, and individuals to provide money for passage on ships. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company, which also ran a fleet of passenger ships, was prepared to transfer the men home but insisted on being paid.

Journalist Matthew Halton recounted how in January 1939 he received a call from a friend in Paris telling him that the Canadians who fought in Spain were in the port of Le Havre. If they did not have passage home, the French government planned to transfer them to refugee camps. Halton said that he was among those who raised money from wealthy people they knew.[3]

Hadesbeck was worried about his return to Canada. He had left during the depths of the Great Depression, and he continued to view the world through that lens. In his lengthy January 1 diary entry, he wrote: “There is nothing in store for us on the North American continent at this time of the year. We would only burden our friends or relatives for our living till spring or have to go on relief.”

Years later a researcher for Pierre Berton asked Hadesbeck how he felt about having gone to Spain. “Well, it was a great experience,” he replied. “It taught me this one thing, not to believe a politician. I now feel that the war was fought for political reasons rather than to better conditions for the people.” He did not name anyone but likely he was talking about the Communist Party people who recruited him, perhaps the commissars in Spain, and Prime Minister Negrín. The interviewer, in a brief evaluation for Berton, wrote, “An interesting interview. Confirms the thesis put up by some men that those volunteers who went to Spain out of no deep political conviction often became disillusioned with their experience.”[4]

For many who have fought in a war, it becomes a defining life event and, as the years pass, the memories provoke nostalgia. Hadesbeck harboured no such emotions. He expressed disdain toward his military superiors and a bitterness toward the commissars. That was genuine, but it also served as an excuse to justify later actions that were in no way valorous.

CHAPTER 5
HOMECOMING

Frank Hadesbeck's return voyage to Canada aboard the *Duchess of Bedford* in February 1939 was far more comfortable than his trip from New York to France a year earlier. The boat, owned by Canadian Pacific Steamships, sailed from Liverpool on February 3, 1939, and arrived in Halifax on February 11. The captain's log indicated there were rough seas for the first few days, but then they moderated.[1]

A four-page broadsheet distributed to passengers contained ads for Drambuie and Craven A cigarettes. A brief news items in the broadsheet indicated the Spanish war was entering its final phase. Republican forces were in retreat toward the French border. Prime Minister Negrín was at the front and personally directing that retreat. In addition, tens of thousands of civilians from the previously Republican-held areas were fleeing toward the border as best they could. Meanwhile Franco had asked France to recognize the Nationalists as the government of Spain, and, according to the broadsheet, the request was being "sympathetically considered."

When the *Duchess* emerged out of the fog to enter Halifax harbour, there were no marching bands or cheering crowds to welcome the fifty bedraggled men who walked down the ship's gangplank. There had been fanfare a week earlier when the first group of returnees arrived on another ship, the *Duchess of Richmond*; but not on this day. Frederick Griffin, a *Toronto Star* reporter, was on hand to describe the scene as Hadesbeck and the others disembarked. A clipping from his story is found in a Security

Service file. Griffin wrote: “This half-platoon of veteran youngsters in hand-me-down clothes … were unheroic and as little military in appearance as Great Lakes deckhands.”[2]

Among the small welcoming party on shore were three plainclothes RCMP officers, Constables Hanson, Wrigglesworth, and Hogarth. They mingled and chatted with the men as they disembarked. A telegram went out on the same day to the RCMP commissioner in Ottawa informing him that this group of veterans would leave Halifax later that evening by train for Montreal, and that “there were no cripples in the party.” The sender promised to forward to the commissioner a list with the names of all passengers.[3]

That list was provided on February 15. It contained Hadesbeck’s name and described him as an “alien.”[4] Despite his being born in what was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was telling that a Canadian citizen who had arrived in 1906 should be described thirty-three years later as an alien. The RCMP was proudly Anglo-Saxon in its orientation and prejudices. Hadesbeck’s forwarding address was listed as the home of his older sister Susanna in Regina. She was, by this time, a widow. Her husband, Frank Ritter, had died in 1935.

The RCMP would have received the arrival information about Hadesbeck from either the shipping company or the immigration officers who processed the volunteers upon their return to Halifax. The *Toronto Star*’s Griffin referred in his story to the returnees “landing this afternoon in the great immigration sheds.”

The Security Service kept a close watch on the recruitment of men for the war in Spain. Their list of those who volunteered contained the name of Frank Hallenback from Lethbridge, Alberta. They got his name wrong. Subsequent lists prepared by historians showed no Hallenback among the volunteers. There was, however, a Frank Hadesbeck, and he was described as a farm worker from Regina, as well as Lethbridge and Taber, Alberta.[5]

Griffin observed the arrival of the fifty volunteers on February 11 but did not quote any of them in his initial story. Yet Hadesbeck somehow came to his attention because three days later another story appeared under Griffin’s byline. It quoted Hadesbeck exclusively and at length. The article on February 14, 1939, bore the title “Not one shell out of one hundred thousand strikes bomber.” In the piece Hadesbeck claimed that Republican

anti-aircraft guns rarely brought down bombers but did force them to fly high enough to drastically limit their accuracy.[6]

Griffin described Hadesbeck as "a loading cannoneer [who] fired 3,500 shots at Franco's Italian, German and Spanish planes." He said that Hadesbeck did not know whether he ever "hit or winged an enemy." The kill count, he said, had to be reported by infantry and other observers. Griffin also described Hadesbeck as having received his anti-aircraft training in the US army.

There is no record of Hadesbeck's passage west from Halifax by train, but a brief story in the Regina newspaper on February 13 said that he would be one of four volunteers returning to that city within the week.[7] Years later he would tell a journalist that when he arrived at the train station, he encountered tearful mothers who did not know whether their sons who had gone to Spain were alive or dead.[8]

On March 1, Hadesbeck wrote to the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company in Chicago, Illinois. Among the company's publications was a magazine called *Popular Aviation*, which had been launched in 1927. In his letter, Hadesbeck said he was just back from fourteen months of service in Spain. That was somewhat misleading because that would have included his travelling to get there and a wait of almost four months to leave the country after the International Brigades stood down. His actual time with the anti-aircraft unit was more like eight months. He said in his letter that he had kept a "continuous diary," and he offered to write about the types of aircraft, bombs, and anti-aircraft guns used in the war. He also said that he had photos.[9]

The next trace of Hadesbeck is in Lethbridge, and again it relates to a publishing event. On April 29, 1939, the *Lethbridge Herald* carried a story on its front page titled "Albertan Helps to Fight Off Franco Planes." This article, much like Griffin's in the *Toronto Star*, dealt with Hadesbeck's experience in an anti-aircraft unit and focused upon the kinds of planes and anti-aircraft guns used in the conflict. Hadesbeck repeated his claim that anti-aircraft guns were largely ineffective against the other side's bombers. The article was illustrated by six photos that Hadesbeck had provided showing the anti-aircraft guns and their crews in Spain. He said that he was in one photo, loading a shell into the big gun.[10]

In June, he had an article published in the *Calgary Herald*, which repeated his arguments about anti-aircraft guns being largely ineffective in bringing down planes.[11] He made several references to his diary and quoted from it. Again, he provided photos used by the newspaper to illustrate his story.

Hadesbeck's earlier approach to Ziff-Davis Publishing paid off in July 1939. That month's edition of *Popular Aviation* carried a piece written by him titled "Anti-aircraft failed in Spain." Hadesbeck's repeated claims that Republican anti-aircraft guns rarely brought down enemy planes is curious because at other times he said quite something else. Asked years later in a CBC Radio interview how many planes his unit shot down, he answered, "Thirty bombers and two fighters."[12]

The editor of *Popular Aviation*, in a subsequent issue of the magazine, wrote about a friend who had been visiting in Italy and was taken to an airshow. There he met two pilots who were reading the July 1939 issue. They mentioned Hadesbeck's article admiringly and praised its accuracy. How did they know? According to the editor, "They knew because they had just returned from Spain where they had served in the very squadrons Mr. Hadesbeck had been using for targets."[13] In other words, they were Italian pilots who had been bombing Spanish cities and civilians in support of Franco and the Nationalists. Whether intentional or not, Hadesbeck was providing succour to democracy's adversaries at a time when war clouds were gathering over Europe.

Despite appearing in Canadian newspapers and his article for *Popular Aviation*, Hadesbeck's prospects were limited at best. The story that appeared in the *Lethbridge Herald* on April 29 said that he was looking for farm work. The list of his jobs later compiled by a niece showed him working in May 1939 at Cardston, Alberta, to the southwest of Lethbridge, likely on a ranch. In December, he returned to Lethbridge; *Henderson's Directory* for 1940 showed him living in Lethbridge's Windsor Hotel and working there as a clerk.

Lethbridge in 1940 had a population of about fourteen thousand. Today it is a commercial, financial, transportation, and industrial centre, as well as a university town, which gives it a progressive tint. The area had been

populated from time immemorial by First Nations, among them the Blackfoot, Sarcee, and Nakoda. Indigenous Peoples had various names for the “black rocks” that they found in the area and used for fires prior to European contact. Geological surveys around 1880 revealed an abundance of coal at Lethbridge, then called Coal Banks, and other deposits at nearby Taber and in the mountains of the Crowsnest Pass, 150 kilometres to the west.[14]

Those finds coincided with construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Steam locomotives ran on coal, and there was plenty of it in Alberta. Coal also became a fuel for heating homes and offices throughout the nation. The demand was insatiable.

Coal mining was a harsh and dangerous occupation, and disasters were common. Miners and their families lived a precarious existence, and the confrontations between workers and the coal bosses were frequent and bitter. Alberta’s first coal strike occurred at Lethbridge in 1887. The companies imported strikebreakers from Eastern Canada and Ohio. The replacement workers were escorted across picket lines by the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP, a predecessor to the RCMP) and the strike was lost. There were strikes again in 1894 and 1897, and again the NWMP was involved on the side of the owners. In 1906, there was a nine-month strike at Lethbridge; again, dozens of officers were involved. Members of the force slept and took their meals in railway cars on company property and at company expense.[15]

With its reputation for labour strife and radical politics, Lethbridge and its surrounding area were of great interest to the RCMP. And it was in Lethbridge that Frank Hadesbeck’s life took a dramatic turn.

CHAPTER 6

RECRUITED BY THE RCMP

Frank Hadesbeck recounted the story of his recruitment by the RCMP obsessively in handwritten notes drafted as a much older man. I have them in my possession, but there is also a sixteen-page document that resides among a portion of Hadesbeck's unprocessed papers at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. The document is titled "The Crises of National Security." Its author is listed as Don Lamraux, the same name Hadesbeck had used in 1926 for his fraudulent re-enlistment in the US army. The contents and language in this document resemble various entries contained in Hadesbeck's handwritten notes. Some of those entries consist of just a few pages. They contain titles like "How I got this special agent's job" and "My association with the securities branch." These various accounts are all similar, although they differ in some small details. For example, in one case he described his recruitment as occurring late in 1940, and in others he placed it in early 1941.[1]

Here is how Hadesbeck began the description in the document claiming Don Lamraux as its author. "It was a day to be remembered, a bleak Friday in a small Alberta town. I was alone and broke and looking for a job. I met a man who changed my life completely."[2] The town was Taber, fifty kilometres east of Lethbridge. In one of his handwritten drafts, Hadesbeck said that he was waiting to go to work on the Albert Green cattle and sheep ranch near Taber. Green was a Scandinavian immigrant who had changed

his name from Albert Damgren. He built a large ranch that continues to this day under another name.

In another draft, Hadesbeck provided more detail. He was in Taber, alone, broke, out of work, and looking for a job: “Manuel Captain struck up a conversation in the local pool hall. He said that a Mr. Gilchrist often helped young unemployed to find jobs, and that I should go to see him at the drug store.”

Captain’s name had surfaced in the questionnaire provided to Hadesbeck by the Spanish Communist Party in December 1938. He was asked: “With which comrade do you have relations and who can confirm the accuracy of what you have said?” The response listed was: “Manuel Captain, Lethbridge, Alberta.”[3] Captain was born Manuel Capton in Galicia, then a part of Romania. He immigrated to Canada in 1910 as a child with his parents, and was described in various census documents as a labourer or farm worker in Taber and Lethbridge.[4]

According to Hadesbeck, he followed Captain’s advice and went to see Gilchrist at his store: “Mr. Gilchrist said he would try to get me a steady job of some kind. He also gave me ten dollars to tide me over the weekend since I was broke. He asked me to come to the drug store during store hours so we could talk between customers.”

On the following Monday, Hadesbeck paid another visit to Gilchrist in the pharmacy. “He gave me another ten dollars for bus fare to Lethbridge to go to see someone there about a steady job,” Hadesbeck wrote. “He said that I should stay at the Windsor Hotel and someone would find me.” Hadesbeck took the bus and stayed at the hotel, which he described in another version of his notes as being shoddy and rundown. He was soon approached by someone who described himself as Mr. Frank: “He said he was looking after the rental branch of a real estate firm in Lethbridge. I later found out that he was an RCMP corporal in the security branch in southern Alberta working out of Calgary.”

Mr. Frank, in turn, took Hadesbeck to meet Herbert Darling, the commanding officer of the Lethbridge RCMP subdivision. Hadesbeck wrote: “Mr. Darling gave me twenty dollars to tide me over at the Windsor Hotel and said to come to see him about a steady job.” Hadesbeck and Darling met again at length on the following day. Darling was an RCMP

veteran, a rapier-thin, bespectacled, austere man, and a relentless anti-communist.

There are intriguing questions surrounding Hadesbeck's recruitment. One is about Howard Gilchrist, who, according to Hadesbeck, sent him into the arms of the Security Service. Gilchrist remains something of a mystery. What was his relationship to the RCMP? It is possible that he was a paid informant, but why would the RCMP put that kind of resource into a town as small as Taber? A possible answer is that the Lethbridge-Taber area had seen its share of bitter coal strikes and militant unions affiliated with the Communist Party. The RCMP could have paid Gilchrist to inform.

Another possibility is that Gilchrist was a casual contact who volunteered information to the police, most likely without being paid. The RCMP could not have collected massive amounts of information on hundreds of thousands of Canadians without voluntary help from many people. Those individuals were anti-communist and held the RCMP in high esteem.[5] I have found no independent evidence to corroborate Hadesbeck's story of meeting with Gilchrist. But Hadesbeck would have had nothing to gain by fabricating those interactions.

There is no mention of Gilchrist in community histories of Taber, but an enterprising staff member at the Calgary Public Library pointed me to a book called *The History of Pharmacy in Alberta*. It makes passing mention of a pharmacist named Howard Gilchrist who worked in a store in Taber.[6] In 1940, he was living and working as a pharmacist in Taber and was on the voters' list there. Gilchrist was married in Lethbridge in 1943, and in 1948 he moved to Sylvan Lake, near Red Deer. He died a few days after suffering a heart attack in 1950.

Equally intriguing was the involvement of Manuel Capton, the man Hadesbeck described to the Communist Party in Spain as a close acquaintance. In their conversation in the Taber pool hall, was Capton simply trying to help an unemployed friend by sending him to Gilchrist? Or was Capton, in a hall-of-mirrors scenario, complicit in Hadesbeck's recruitment by the RCMP? There is no documentation beyond Hadesbeck's notes to support either scenario.

Whatever Capton's role, Hadesbeck went to see Gilchrist. The pharmacist gave him enough money to get through a weekend and then catch a bus to Lethbridge. There Hadesbeck met with fifty-two-year-old Herbert Darling. Darling had been appointed commanding officer of the Lethbridge RCMP detachment a few years earlier in June 1937, the latest in a string of successful career moves.

Herbert Darling was born in Cardiff, Wales, in 1887.[7] As a young man, he took courses in shorthand, typing, and accounts, which he used in a series of office jobs with a paint manufacturer, a colliery, and the Remington Typewriter Company. Later he became the principal of a commercial and civil service training college, which was, by his own admission, a failed endeavour. He emigrated to Canada along with his wife Mary in May 1913, and in the following month he joined the Royal North-West Mounted Police (as the force was then known).[8] Darling was hired not as a recruit, but rather as a civilian constable. He was assigned to be a stenographer for the commissioner, whose headquarters in those years were in Regina. In a letter accompanying his application, Darling described himself as "a strict teetotaler, steady in all [his] habits and a churchman."

By September 1913 Darling was a full-blown recruit. The doctor conducting his medical exam described his temperament as "nervous." Darling must have been impressive on the job, however, because he worked closely with the commissioner and he was almost immediately promoted to sergeant.

By the time he was engaged for a second three-year stint in Regina in 1916, Darling had been granted a separation allowance. His wife and two children were back living in England. The file contains several anguished letters from Mary Darling to the RNWMP commissioner between 1915 and 1918 saying that she could not afford to live on the allowance, and that she did not even know what her husband's salary was. In a letter in 1917, she asked the commissioner if he knew of Darling's whereabouts because mutual acquaintances reported having seen him in England. The commissioner's office informed her that Darling had been granted leave for four months and was temporarily in England. The office provided her with

an address. She was told in a later letter that the matter of her separation allowance was being investigated and that it would be adjusted.

RCMP officer Herbert Darling recruited Frank Hadesbeck. *Leader-Post* (Regina) photo, 1945.

In May 1918, Darling, back in Regina, enlisted with an RNWMP unit in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He served at Canadian Corps Headquarters in France, Belgium, and Germany. He was discharged

honourably in June 1919 and returned to Regina, where he was re-engaged for another three-year term. Whatever family problems they may have had, Darling's wife Mary returned with him to Canada. She and two children were listed as arriving on a ship from Liverpool to Quebec City in the same month. Darling was transferred to Toronto in 1920. A note in the file in July of that year indicated that Mary joined him there. The 1921 census showed Darling, his wife, and now three children living in Toronto. He listed his occupation as detective.

In Toronto, Darling was instrumental in reorganizing the Criminal Investigation Branch of the RCMP's Ontario Division. There was at the time no clear distinction between criminal and intelligence work. Darling focused on the latter, including the supervision of officers who went undercover. He created a system, which was to become widely used by the RCMP, for receiving and filing intelligence reports from the field. His system described and categorized people and organizations that the RCMP considered subversive.[9]

In 1935, the RCMP lent Darling to the Vancouver City Police Department for two years. The mayor, Gerald McGeer, was waging a campaign against what he considered communist subversion after a period of labour unrest and strikes. McGeer did not trust his local police force to support employers and to take a hard enough line against strikers. Local police officers had organized a union in 1918 and threatened a strike to achieve it. They became members of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council.[10]

Darling was an RCMP outsider in Vancouver and not about to get too close to the community. He was also a product of the force's paramilitary training, ardently anti-communist and anti-labour. Drawing upon his experience in Toronto, he imposed a centralized registry system for subversion-related files. He changed the name of the police department's Secret Activities Branch to the Communist Activities Branch. Darling had also become an expert in the emerging use of fingerprinting and introduced the technique into the Vancouver police force.[11]

Following his time in Vancouver, Darling did a brief stint at RCMP headquarters, which had by then been moved from Regina to Ottawa. In 1937, he was named commanding officer of the RCMP Lethbridge subdivision. In that capacity, in 1939 he distributed an internal memo

describing three public meetings held by the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in and near Lethbridge. The meetings were intended to raise money to assist returning Canadians who had fought for the Republicans in Spain. Darling signed off as the commanding officer and wrote the words “Still Under Investigation.”[12]

When he met with Frank Hadesbeck, Darling was an experienced officer and in complete control. Hadesbeck described their first meeting:

> I was turned over to Darling who later became top man as commissioner. I was made an offer I could not refuse and the assurance of a job as long as I needed one. There was no chance of my ever being drafted into the army, and I received an additional, tax-free payment in cash as a special agent. Since I had no education to speak of, no trade or skills, had a mild case of dyslexia, and couldn’t speak too well, I jumped at the chance of becoming gainfully employed in the prestigious national security service branch.[13]

There was just one hitch regarding Hadesbeck’s recruitment. Darling told him that he would have to become a member of the Communist Party. If not, the deal was off. Darling instructed Hadesbeck to go to Calgary and to check in to the Alexandra Hotel. He was to wait for someone to contact him. “This I did and I never saw Mr. Darling again,” Hadesbeck wrote.

Darling had a successful career in the RCMP and eventually became an assistant commissioner, working out of Edmonton between 1946 and 1949. After his retirement, he took contracts on two occasions with the Colombian government to set up a system of identification cards for all males over the age of twenty-one. The cards contained both photos and fingerprints.[14]

The RCMP’s courting of Hadesbeck would have been carefully planned, based upon intelligence gathered on him and judgments made about his psychological profile. The RCMP knew that he was one of the volunteers from Lethbridge and area to the Spanish war. They’d had him under observation from the day of his return to Canada on February 11, 1939. Did Hadesbeck speak to one of the three plainclothes RCMP officers who

mingled with the returning volunteers on the dock in Halifax? We do not know. We do know that the RCMP read the *Toronto Star* article by Frederick Griffin in which Hadesbeck was quoted exclusively about his anti-aircraft experience. The article is contained in a Security Service file at Library and Archives Canada.

The motives behind anyone becoming a police informant have been encapsulated in the acronym MICE: money, ideology, compromise, and ego. Steve Hewitt, who has written extensively about informants, describes what he calls "overlapping motivations." To the MICE list, Hewitt adds ingratiation, disgruntlement, the thrill of trafficking in secrets, vengeance, and nationalism.[15] Hadesbeck's self-admitted motivation was money and financial security, something that obsessed him throughout his life. He made some attempts in his later jottings to describe himself as a patriot and an anti-communist, but they appear to be only half-hearted. As for compromise, it is unlikely the RCMP would have had any damaging information, sexual or otherwise, that would have allowed the force to blackmail him.

Hadesbeck also seems to have been motivated by a combination of disgruntlement and ingratiation, and a blend of ego along with a craving for excitement. Upon his return to Canada, he wrote at least three published articles about his experiences in Spain, an impressive achievement for an itinerant farmhand with a limited formal education. Hadesbeck's disgruntlement in Spain had been made clear in his diary. His scornful comments about the commissars may have suggested a desire for revenge upon the Communist Party.

Another possible motive surfaces in Hadesbeck's files, which contain excerpts from several 1939 issues of a publication called *Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. The publication originated from the Apostleship of Prayer, a pious Catholic association founded in France in the mid-1800s. The *Messenger* was eventually published in forty-four languages. Its avowed purpose was to encourage prayer and devotion, but it was also stridently anti-communist. Although Hadesbeck never gave any indication of being devout, his family were Catholics, as were most of the Swabian German immigrants from Hungary. He had also attended Catholic primary schools, if only for a few years.

A column in the *Messenger* for May 1939 talked about the communists in Eastern Europe: “It is the torture chamber, not the polling booth that accompanies the armies of Moscow.” In August, the *Messenger* warned about Soviet designs upon Canada: “Communists are parasites who live on, and who have risen to office on the backs of, deluded labor-unionists. The sooner our labor-unions clear out the Reds who are using the unions as tools in their efforts to propagate Communism and to assist Soviet Russia, the sooner they will be able to accomplish useful work for the benefit of Canadian working men.”[16] Hadesbeck obviously read the *Messenger* and thought it worthy of saving in his files. If he was nursing a grudge against the commissars and communism in general, the *Messenger* may have helped to stoke his resentment.

Still, it was the prospect of a steady income, not to mention tax-free supplements, that most appealed to Hadesbeck. He had not had an easy life. He’d arrived in Canada with his parents as a young child. They both died by the time he was eleven years old, leaving him to fend for himself. He had little education and no trade, and it was his misfortune to come of age during the Great Depression, which crushed the hopes of millions of people in Canada. But Hadesbeck was by no means the only person to have endured a difficult childhood and the ravages of the Depression. Most of the Canadians serving in Spain had endured even worse in Ottawa’s work camps for unemployed young men. A police memo in 1949 indicated that the RCMP tried to recruit Spanish Civil War veterans to become informants, but without success.[17] Hadesbeck was to be the exception.

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING A SURVEILLANCE STATE

The RCMP was created in 1920 by a merger of the Dominion Police and the Royal North-West Mounted Police, which had been created to serve in the West in 1873 (as the North-West Mounted Police; “Royal” was added to the name in 1904). The well-worn narrative is that the government created a police force to investigate crime, keep the peace, and protect Indigenous Peoples from amoral and violent traders entering the country from the US. But in a book critical of the force published in 1973, on the centennial of the NWMP’s creation, authors Lorne and Caroline Brown wrote that in 1873 the NWMP was “specifically designed to be a paramilitary cavalry force which would perform not only a conventional police role, but which might also be called upon to carry out distinctly military functions.”[1]

The NWMP was modelled on the Irish Constabulary that Great Britain used to control social unrest and civil strife in Ireland. Sir John A. Macdonald, the Canadian prime minister of the day, wanted a mounted paramilitary cavalry that could both police and fight. In Western Canada, it was the region’s Indigenous Peoples who were seen as a threat to be suppressed and controlled. Canada did not engage in the all-out extermination carried out by the US cavalry, but the NWMP was given the task of ensuring that First Nations people were placed on reservations and of enforcing the pass system to ensure they stayed there.

When the Métis and First Nations allies engaged in armed resistance in 1885, the NWMP was sent into action along with regular military forces to suppress the uprising. The police also had a hand in apprehending and punishing those who had been engaged in the resistance. Eight Indigenous warriors were executed in the police stockade at Battleford, and members of the NWMP, along with a regular battery of soldiers from Eastern Canada, formed a security square around the scaffold.[2] When Métis leader Louis Riel was hanged in Regina in 1885 for his part in the North-West Resistance, it was at the NWMP barracks in Regina, with the police guarding the scene.

Most of the NWMP's original leading officers and many of its recruits were drawn from a military background. The commissioner was given wide powers and the force had a rigid, militaristic system of rank. Recruits attended (as they still do) the training depot in Regina, where they were indoctrinated for six months while living in isolation from the community. Discipline was imposed from above, handled internally and in secret, without external or civilian oversight. Recruits had to sign on for a fixed term and were not allowed to resign during that time. Single men needed permission to get married.

The NWMP was regularly sent in to break strikes for the Canadian Pacific Railway among construction crews, engineers, and other workers.[3] The police also acted as strikebreakers in the coal fields, and in some instances, they were used to infiltrate the striking unions. During the First World War, both the RNWMP and the Dominion Police were involved in rounding up "aliens" under the terms of the *War Measures Act*. By war's end nearly nine thousand people had been interned in camps. Another eighty thousand had been registered and examined without being detained.[4] Most of them were Germans, Hungarians, and Ukrainians because Canada was at war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ukrainians were included because many of them came from Galicia, which, however unwillingly, was a province in the Austrian empire.

There were other domestic hot spots during the war. Manufacturers were profiting at a time when wartime inflation made life difficult for most people. There was a growing working class in Canadian cities and those workers were becoming restive. There were strikes and an accompanying interest in Canada's nascent union movement. There was enthusiasm among

many working people for the Russian Revolution in 1917, but it provoked consternation in the Canadian establishment. The heavy-handed excesses of the government and police force toward “aliens” and workers during the war, the troubled economy, and events in Russia and elsewhere in Europe led to a heightened level of class conflict in Canada.

The unrest reached its peak during the Winnipeg General Strike. More than thirty thousand workers shut down the city in May 1919 to win the right to bargain collectively for better wages and working conditions. The most influential business leaders and politicians responded quickly, organizing a citizens’ committee to lead a campaign against the strikers. The committee refused to negotiate on the workplace issues put forward. They said the strikers were revolutionaries bent on destroying the constituted order and described them as “alien scum” from Eastern Europe.[5] Academics who have studied counter-subversion activities by the state describe this as the “agitator-subversion thesis”: heaping blame on suspect individuals while denying the existence of social and economic factors as the cause of unrest.[6]

Winnipeg’s mayor fired most of the city’s police because they were considered too sympathetic to the strikers. Those police officers were replaced by special constables recruited and paid for by the business community. The RNWMP also became involved. After five weeks, twelve of the strike’s leaders were arrested. When others held a silent parade to support them, RNWMP officers, bolstered by civilian recruits, waded into the crowd. They killed two and injured dozens more. The day ended with federal troops occupying the streets. The strike was broken amid bloodshed and violence.[7]

The Winnipeg strike shook the establishment. Ottawa’s response was twofold. The federal government quickly crafted amendments to the Criminal Code known as Section 98 that allowed for the apprehension, imprisonment, and deportation of those belonging to what were considered unlawful organizations. The definition of what constituted such an organization was broad and much was left to interpretation. Penalties included up to twenty years in prison and deportation. The legislation

primarily targeted trade unionists and other progressives. Hundreds were deported in the 1930s for political reasons.[8]

Ottawa's second reaction was to tighten up on policing, with a special emphasis on counter-subversion and intelligence gathering.[9] The cabinet minister responsible for the RNWMP believed neither that force nor the Dominion Police could provide the timely intelligence needed to combat what he called "revolutionary agitators." Commissioner A. B. Perry of the RNWMP recommended that the two forces merge and report to one minister. In the postwar world, Perry argued, policing had become more complex. He was referring to labour militancy and what in an earlier setting he had described as "the pernicious doctrines of Bolshevism." He offered to provide more efficient policing and an improved capacity to infiltrate and spy upon labour and the left.

Perry achieved a part of what he wanted. The Royal North-West Mounted Police was given jurisdiction over national security throughout the country. The task resided within a new Criminal Investigation Branch headquartered in Regina. Then, within a year, the RNWMP and Dominion Police were merged into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The force quickly created a Central Registry archive containing names that had been collected in previous undercover work. Between 1919 and 1934, files on twenty-five thousand people were compiled.

In addition to its policing and mounted cavalry functions, the RNWMP already had experience in surveillance and counter-subversion prior to and during the First World War. Now the newly formed RCMP was tasked with expanding that mandate. The security state had arrived in Canada.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929, with its attendant hardships for working people, initiated a new round of labour activism and state repression. Communists were active in trade unions and organized new ones, particularly among industrial and unskilled workers. They were also instrumental in creating unions in work camps, organizing the 1935 On-to-Ottawa Trek, and the recruitment of Canadians to fight in Spain. But communists did not have the activist terrain all to themselves. The decade also saw the formation of new populist parties of the left and the right, including the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, Social Credit, and

in Quebec, the Union Nationale. The RCMP intensified its surveillance and intelligence gathering with some attention to each of these groups, but with a continuing fixation upon the communists.

One evening in 1931, police in Toronto raided Communist Party offices and the homes of several of its leaders, including party secretary Tim Buck. The arrested leaders were charged under Section 98 of the Criminal Code for belonging to an unlawful association and with sedition. At a subsequent trial, the prosecution argued that they intended to overthrow the state by violent means. On the witness stand, Buck said that he and his comrades had committed no violent acts and were being charged for what they thought rather than for anything they had done. As for its agenda, he argued that the party was simply preparing the working class for inevitable violence that would accompany the collapse of capitalism. His lawyers also argued that Section 98 was a harsh and unreasonable law.

In a charge to the jury, the judge responded to that assertion, saying that a harsh law was needed to prevent the overthrow of constitutional government by force and violence, which the Communist Party was advocating. The jury found all eight party members guilty, and they were sentenced to prison. On appeal, charges of seditious conspiracy were overturned but the other verdicts under Section 98 were upheld.[10]

During the early 1930s, the pace of surveillance, arrests, trials, and imprisonment picked up across the country. The Canadian Labour Defence League was created in response, to protect the civil liberties of those caught up in the police dragnet. The league was organized and led by the Communist Party, but it attracted widespread public support. Its membership in 1933 was four times that of the party itself.

After the German-Soviet non-aggression pact in August 1939, and the outbreak of war in September, the RCMP Intelligence Section grew quickly. In 1940, there were about twenty people at its Ottawa headquarters. By 1941, that number had increased to eighty, with added staff in divisional offices across the country. The Intelligence Branch remained housed under the Criminal Investigation Branch, which meant that regional RCMP divisions and subdivisions were engaged both in criminal matters and in running informants. Hadesbeck and others supplied a steady flow of information, which their handlers passed on to headquarters. The RCMP was represented on several interdepartmental government committees to

prepare for the war and said that the force had prepared lists of “potential enemy aliens” and other suspects who could be rounded up at “a moment’s notice.”[11]

The RCMP had for years been producing weekly reports on “subversive” activity in Canada, which were sent to the prime minister and cabinet. Some mandarins were unimpressed with the quality of analysis the RCMP was providing. In a memo to his boss, Jack Pickersgill, a senior adviser to Prime Minister King, listed the defects: an inability to distinguish between facts and hearsay; an “anti-Red complex” that paints labour organizers and “mild radicals” as communists; no discrimination between legitimate social and political criticism and subversive doctrine; an almost exclusive preoccupation with “so-called subversive organizations”; and very little information on Nazis or fascists. In summary, Pickersgill told the prime minister, “what is more disturbing is the evidence of a total lack of capacity, education, and training required for real intelligence work, and a failure to appreciate the direction from which serious danger may threaten us.”[12]

Pickersgill may have been contemptuous of what passed for analysis in the *Security Bulletins*, but the RCMP nonetheless had assembled its list of perceived enemies and was ready to pounce.

Frank Hadesbeck’s recruitment coincided with an expansion in the RCMP’s capacity to carry out surveillance on the subversives that it believed existed everywhere. One of its tools was the use of undercover agents who were police officers. Another approach, in which Hadesbeck participated, involved the use of civilians as human sources. Hadesbeck had not been active in working-class agitation or politics prior to enlisting to fight in Spain. When the Winnipeg General Strike occurred in 1919, his older brothers had just rescued him from his tenure with an exploitative farmer and spirited him off to Clinton, Iowa. He remained in the US until 1929. When Tim Buck and others were arrested in 1931, Hadesbeck was back in Regina working at a filling station. When the On-to-Ottawa trekkers were attacked by police in Regina on July 1, 1935, Hadesbeck was herding sheep on a ranch near Taber, Alberta.

It was his decision to volunteer in Spain that brought Hadesbeck to police attention in 1937. Even then, he had not been involved in any political activity and was not a communist. When Hadesbeck returned from Spain in February 1939, he and others on the returning ships were tracked by police from the moment they arrived in Halifax. We do not know what led the RCMP to decide that he was a likely candidate for recruitment. His later mantra was: “They approached me, not me them.”

Many years after his recruitment, the McDonald Commission into RCMP wrongdoing neatly outlined four categories of RCMP sources.[13] There were volunteers, who provided information mostly for free. Their meetings with police handlers were infrequent. The pharmacist in Taber who steered Hadesbeck toward the RCMP may have been a volunteer. Secondly, there were what McDonald called undeveloped casual sources, who were usually not paid either. An example might be a commissionaire or security officer at a building or institution. Further up the line there were developed casual sources, recruited after considerable planning. Each had a specific RCMP handler assigned to remain in frequent contact. The source was paid occasionally, mostly for expenses. An example might be a civil servant or a university professor.

Finally, there were long-term penetration sources, sometimes known within the RCMP as secret agents. They were recruited after lengthy profiling and attempts by the RCMP to cultivate a relationship. The police appointed a handler or, more often, a series of handlers over time. Each worked closely with the source and often became friendly with them. The person was paid regularly and received compensation for expenses. That source was either already in a targeted organization or was able to infiltrate it on behalf of the RCMP. Hadesbeck fit that description.

Justice McDonald described people like Hadesbeck as “the bread and butter” of security work, even in the 1970s.[14] The popular images associated with police surveillance are the wiretapping of phones or the planting of listening devices in hotels or meeting rooms and embassies. All of that did occur, but human sources were common and more valuable. Author John Sawatsky describes it this way in his book *Men in the Shadows*: “Reliable informers with deep roots in a targeted organization are the most valuable assets a security service can have. One good informer displaces the need for a dozen bugs and wiretaps and scores of surveillance agents.”[15]

The increase in staffing and responsibility granted to the Secret Service after 1939 was accompanied by a leap in the number of undercover agents in the field. We do not know how many there were, but an authorized RCMP history described the agents, with understatement, as “operating reasonably evenly throughout Canada.”[16] Frank Hadesbeck was one of many.

CHAPTER 8

UNDERCOVER IN CALGARY

When Hadesbeck arrived in Calgary from Lethbridge, he followed Herbert Darling's orders to check into the Alexandra Hotel. It was a six-storey building and had been one of Calgary's finest when it was built in 1911, but it preserved only a faded elegance in what was by the early 1940s a thriving city of about ninety thousand.

The Calgary area had long been inhabited by the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Nakoda and Tsuut'ina First Nations, as well as the Métis. The location in a river valley made it a good area for hunting, fishing, and trading among Indigenous Peoples. The arrival of thousands of settlers to the West following Confederation drove the signing of treaties between the federal government and First Nations. Most of southern Alberta is covered by Treaty Seven, negotiated in 1877.

The Canadian Pacific Railway arrived in 1883, setting off a housing boom that attracted workers in the building trades. The first unions to be organized represented railway workers. A few years later, the meat-packing industry began to operate on an industrial model. Labour relations in that industry were tense and at times explosive. The RCMP was ever vigilant about unions.[1]

Hadesbeck's instructions from Darling were to sit and wait.[2] He was soon contacted by an officer who gave him fifty dollars to cover his room and meals, along with a telephone number to call in any emergency. It was

customary for handlers to dole out money in small amounts to their sources, a frequent assertion of who was in control.

Frank Hadesbeck in Calgary, circa 1941. Courtesy Phyllis Pederson.

The officer reminded Hadesbeck that he must join the Communist Party or the deal was off. Hadesbeck went to the party office and, by happy coincidence, encountered Don Guise, a communist he had known in

Lethbridge. According to an RCMP surveillance document, Guise had been in Lethbridge in 1936.[3] That chance meeting with Guise at the Calgary office, in addition to his having fought in Spain, paved the way for Hadesbeck to join the party. Guise was later to be purged from a union because of his politics.[4]

Hadesbeck reported to his handler, who told him to wait until final approval for his employment arrived from Ottawa. Several days later he was taken into an RCMP office where he was fingerprinted, weighed, photographed, and checked for birthmarks and scars. “I was reassured of the rightness of my decision by my new contact,” Hadesbeck wrote later. “I was told I was like an investigative reporter in the media whose job was to investigate in secret the assignments given to him. My contact said I was not an informer or a stool pigeon or a snitch as other informers were classified. I was part of a team on a monthly salary, plus expenses, and was given a number.”

Several officers briefed Hadesbeck about what would become the core of his work. One of them was L. O. Jones. Hadesbeck wrote: “He kept in touch with me, showing me pictures to identify and said he would take anything that I had to offer about goings on at the Communist Party office. I was to sign my reports only as S.A. [Secret Agent] 810 and never by my own name.” Hadesbeck liked to think of himself as a secret agent, but the Security Service would likely have referred to him as a source. He was not a member of the force, but rather a civilian working undercover for a lengthy period. Hadesbeck was right in saying that his name would not be used and that he would have been assigned a number to identify him. The service instructed its sources to use identifying numbers rather than their names when reporting. Only a few senior officers knew who the sources were, and they were not supposed to share their names, even with other members of the RCMP.[5]

Hadesbeck took a day job for Bennett and White Construction, while acting as an informant. His notes say that the RCMP found the job for him: “This I could never have got on my own since I had no construction experience. Farm labour is about all I knew.” Hadesbeck’s papers in the Saskatchewan archives contain notes from November and December 1940 about Bennett

and White. They deal mainly with personnel policies and the alleged padding of hours on government wartime contracts to increase profits.[6]

Hadesbeck was soon meeting in secret with his handlers, and they provided him with detailed instructions:

> I was told not to take on any jobs that would take me away from more important meetings of the Communist Party or put me out of touch with the leaders and secretaries. I was to volunteer only for positions that would make it possible for me to gain access to important mail, names and addresses, and the traveling itinerary of party leaders and visiting person on speaking tours and names of national communist executives from the Toronto party office.

He followed orders and volunteered for mostly clerical tasks:

> I gave them a lot of mail that came to the Communist Party office and mailbox. We would hold up the mail, keep it an extra day, give it to our contact, let him do what he wanted with it, then put it back in the mail. I also noted all the newspapers and other information that came in. I was asked to copy names from letters left around the party office, as well as names and phone numbers that were left on scratch pads and papers in the wastebasket. I was asked to make a drawing of the inside of the office, the number of rooms, partitions, bookshelves, locations of phone, typewriter desk, filing cabinets and windows. They wanted this information for their bugging operation.

The RCMP's interception of mail was common practice and was legal during the Second World War under the Defence of Canada Regulations. That permission ended in 1955, but the RCMP continued the practice. It was illegal to do so, but people highly placed in government were prepared to look the other way.[7]

Hadesbeck's handlers wanted facts, not analysis: "I soon realized that I was being paid to collect information only, not to think about why they wanted all this information about people who I thought were honest Canadian citizens." The Security Service wanted information on people

they considered to be subversive but was not interested in understanding why those individuals were critical of the existing economic and political system.

Here is how Hadesbeck described his first assignment: “I was to get the local Communist Party leaders’ names, addresses and phone numbers, what their position was with the party and where each one of them worked. This took about three weeks to a month.” There is among Hadesbeck’s files a five-page typewritten list that contains the names and, in most cases, the addresses of about two hundred party members in various Calgary branches.[8]

In August 1942, he provided a list of those attending what he described as the first mass meeting since the party had gone underground in 1940. There were twenty-five people there and Hadesbeck’s name was listed among them. He was described on the attendees’ list as a city organizer for the party.[9]

In October 1942, he provided a list of thirty-two donors and subscribers to the party’s newspaper, the *Canadian Tribune*.[10] He also provided the names of thirty-one “leaders and prominent people” in the Calgary and district party. Again, his own name was on the list, along with those of George and Tillie Taylor, and Josephine Gehl, the three of whom Hadesbeck would later encounter in Saskatchewan. He regularly provided brief reports on ordinary party meetings under the title “Communist activity in Calgary.”[11]

Hadesbeck was instructed to find a list of people supporting a strike fund for gold miners at Kirkland Lake, Ontario: “To check the lists of the strike fund in the local newspapers for names of either Communist Party members, fellow travellers, or known members-at-large.” The miners went out on strike in November 1941 after their employers refused to accept a vote in which the workers agreed to be represented by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, also known as Mine Mill. The union was also active in organizing miners elsewhere and was sympathetic to the Communist Party.[12]

The dispute was a bitter one and the strikers drew support from across the country. The walkout failed, and after three months, the miners returned to work. But their strike united the labour movement around the demand for collective bargaining legislation, which was won in 1944.

After the Communist Party was banned in 1940, it created the Labour Progressive Party as its political wing in 1943. The ban on the Communist Party remained in place until 1956, so the LPP regularly put forward candidates for election. Hadesbeck was on the LPP's Calgary executive, all the while providing his handlers with minutes from local meetings. In January 1945, he supplied a ten-page report on the provincial LPP convention. The document included the names of twenty-two members on the party's provincial committee, the names of those who carried out various convention tasks, and a list of the guests, including national leader Tim Buck.[13]

Hadesbeck became custodian of the local party's mimeograph machine, on which he produced news releases and leaflets. He was also the librarian, selling books for between five and twenty-five cents. Titles in the Little Lenin Library included *The Teachings of Karl Marx*; *The Revolution of 1905*; *Problems of Leninism*; and *The War of National Liberation*, by Joseph Stalin.[14]

Hadesbeck's handlers told him that they collected information from sources like him throughout Canada and that it was all shared with headquarters in Ottawa: "Information gathered is filed and processed in detail, no matter how unimportant it may seem. Bits of information from here and there fall into a pattern that keeps check on persons, groups, parties, and organizations, and eventually to build a case."

Hadesbeck's notes also describe another, longer-term project. "Part of my work was to go backwards in years and gather all the Communist Party history I could—names, places, even newspaper photos of former and present party members, and history items of the party in Canada."[15] That may explain why Hadesbeck's papers contain recycled brown envelopes crammed with clippings and photos drawn from Communist Party and other publications.

There are also among the papers in my possession about two thousand typewritten pages containing the names and brief descriptions of a variety of party members and other people considered to be sympathizers. They all date to the early 1940s when Hadesbeck was in Calgary, and his terse comments are consistent in style with his other written notes. There is, for example, an entry on Josephine Gehl. Hadesbeck wrote of her: "Reported to be sent from Saskatoon Sask by the Central Committee of the C.P. in

Toronto Ont. to become Sec. of the Calgary C.P. in July 1941." Hadesbeck had a typewriter, but he was a one-fingered typist. It would have been a long and arduous task for him to record all this information.[16]

According to Hadesbeck, the Security Service used four categories to identify the relationship of individuals to the Communist Party.[17] He used that shorthand description in his reports over the years. First, there were members of the local party, who were listed as such. A sub-category here was the member-at-large, people who were members but whose names were never listed. Second, there were fellow travellers, who followed the party line but had not actually joined the party. Third, there were contributors, who were not members but were prepared to make donations toward elections or special campaigns. Finally, there were sympathizers, who were supportive in general. The local party executive saw some among this group as candidates for future membership.

Most often the secretive member-at-large category applied to people in sensitive positions, including academics and union activists. Were their affiliation known, they might be driven from their jobs. The arrangement made sense for an organization that had been declared illegal and whose members were regularly harassed and even interned.

The existence of a member-at-large category likely fed RCMP suspicions that almost anyone could, secretly, be a party member. In his reports, Hadesbeck often speculated on whether individuals on his Watch Out lists were members-at-large. He would have been tempted to say that they were, rather than admitting that he did not know. The loose description suited the RCMP as well. The greater the number of suspected people it could identify, the greater the case to be made for budget increases and the accumulation of power and authority.

The Communist Party was both hierarchical and decentralized in its organization.[18] Hierarchical in that Tim Buck, its leader for thirty-three years, presided with a small group of male confidants, most of them from Toronto. They made decisions and manipulated outcomes. At the local level, the party existed in small groups or cells. That practice began with Lenin and the Bolsheviks when they had to organize clandestinely. It was a

way to avoid detection and infiltration, particularly when the party was outlawed.

The Security Service targeted the Communist Party and trade unions aggressively, but the surveillance went beyond those organizations to include anyone who held progressive views. Hadesbeck maintained Watch Out lists and was told to listen carefully and report on what members said about those individuals. He wrote: “When we got information on people involved in organizations such as unions or ethnic groups, the evidence we received would be used to make judgments on their level of involvement with the Communist Party or subversion. Sometimes, even if a person was known not to be a member of the Communist Party, information was gleaned to try and link unions or ethnic groups with the Communist Party.”

That description squares well with what was written years later by academics about the Security Service. In their book *Secret Service*, Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby describe “copious amounts of information” being collected on individuals by RCMP undercover police officers, but to an even greater extent by civilian sources like Hadesbeck.[19] The information was shared between RCMP districts and headquarters and with other government agencies.

Every larger RCMP detachment housed officers whose key task was to act as contacts for agents like Hadesbeck and for other, more casual sources. Hadesbeck named some of those officers in the notes he was warned not to keep. There are simple ways to verify the officers’ identities. One is to use *Henderson’s Directory* for Calgary during the time that Hadesbeck lived there. Another method is to use information assembled on a website called RCMP Graves, which provides basic details about the lives and careers of RCMP officers.

Hadesbeck’s notes described meetings with an officer named J. J. Campbell for each of the years between 1942 and 1945. Campbell and Hadesbeck developed a close and cordial working relationship. *Henderson’s Directory* listed John J. Campbell as an RCMP officer in Calgary throughout the 1940s.[20] Campbell was born in Tyrone County, Ireland, and came to Canada in 1927 at age seventeen. He joined the force in Regina in 1935, serving there and later in Calgary and Edmonton.[21] A *Calgary Herald*

article in 1946 described Campbell's promotion to become a detective corporal.[22] He achieved the rank of staff sergeant before his retirement in 1960. Campbell made a lasting impression upon Hadesbeck, perhaps because they were associated over a several-year period. That was an exception; the Security Service usually replaced handlers frequently to prevent them from becoming too close to their agents.

In April 1941, Hadesbeck went to work for the Burns and Company meat-packing plant. He claimed in his notes that the RCMP found him the job with the co-operation of company officers. He wrote: "Robert J. Dinning, Burns and Co. board chairman along with Fred Berrill, plant manager both knew of my work as a special agent."[23] Berrill was listed in *Henderson's Directory* as the plant superintendent for Burns and Company. Dinning became executive vice-president of Burns in 1942 and was later named company president.

Here is how Hadesbeck described his task at Burns: "In order to keep track of the inroads the Alberta Communist Party was making in the labour movement it was necessary to get someone who worked where a trade union was already in force, or about to be certified. This someone was myself. I was chosen to form a union at Burns and Co. so that everything would always be known."[24]

There was a history of labour strife at Burns, which, like other companies in the meat-packing industry, was strongly anti-union. In 1920, workers at the Calgary plant struck for union recognition and a contract, but they were defeated. In 1937, an affiliate of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour attempted to organize the plants in Edmonton and Calgary. Workers staged sit-down strikes. They were seeking relief from dangerous work and poor pay, and demanding recognition of their right to organize. They, too, were defeated.[25]

I thought that Hadesbeck's claim about being involved in a union drive was likely an exaggerated boast. But then I came across a letter to him from Carl Berg. Berg was secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour, and a national representative for the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC). He was involved in organizing unions in the province and across Western Canada, usually on an individual worksite basis. He and the

trades-based TLC were in competition with the upstart Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), which was dedicated to industry-wide unionism. Berg did not want Burns's workers to go with the CCL.

In the letter to Hadesbeck dated July 10, 1941, Berg referred to a meeting they'd had during the previous week. He wrote: "In our conversation last Friday night it was suggested that you and brother Armbrust should meet and talk over matters pertaining to organization and what chances there would be to build up the Calgary local union."[26] There was no *Henderson's Directory* for Calgary in 1941, but in 1940 there was a single entry for Henry Armbrust, who was listed as a steelworker.

Berg's diary, housed among his papers at Library and Archives Canada, showed him travelling through Calgary with his family on June 28, 1941, on the way to holiday at a cottage in the mountains. On July 1, he was again in Calgary preparing pamphlets to be delivered to the workers at Burns. Berg met with Hadesbeck on July 4. On July 10, Berg's diary showed him back in his Edmonton office, and he wrote to Hadesbeck referring to the previous week's meeting.[27]

Hadesbeck's files contain a booklet with his membership card for Packing Plant Employees, Federal Union 105, in Calgary. A stamp in the booklet said the union was organized in November 1942 by the TLC.[28] Berg would have been involved in the effort. Other labour leaders at the time, and academics more recently, have criticized him for organizing company-friendly unions without the full consent of employees.[29]

As a young man, Berg had supported radical unionism, but he became increasingly conservative. He was on amiable terms with both Social Credit premier William Aberhart and his successor Ernest Manning. Berg and his wife were frequently invited to government banquets and events, and they accepted most invitations. In 1947, Berg was offered a job by the federal Progressive Conservatives as an adviser on labour matters. He was flattered and tempted by the salary and pension but did not accept.[30]

Berg's union local at Burns was soon swept away by the more militant United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPW), an international union based in Chicago. In 1946, Burns workers voted to leave the union local organized by Berg and to become members of the UPW. A year later, five hundred Burns workers voted to join a nationwide strike that led to a system of industry bargaining. Using that template, agreements negotiated with one

employer were used as a precedent to demand similar or better contracts with others. Those agreements eventually covered big plants throughout the industry in Canada.[31] Berg and the TLC opposed that approach and the unions using it, but to no avail.

There is a final twist to this story, at least according to Hadesbeck. His notes contain a handwritten note dated October 20, 1941, shortly before unionization by the Trades and Labour Congress. He wrote: “Had a meeting with ‘X’ of Burns and Co. and ‘Y’ of Security Service in regard to union organizing at Burns and Co. Plant. This meeting took place at Mr. ——’s house after 10 p.m.”[32] If Hadesbeck’s claim is true, he was indeed involved in creating a company-friendly union. He did so with the assistance of Burns’s management in tandem with the Security Service.

A related question is whether Berg was aware of this collusion. There is no evidence to prove that he was. Hadesbeck was obviously working with Berg but was also employed by the RCMP in assisting the company against the interests of its employees. That kind of activity moved the RCMP beyond surveillance into the territory of dirty tricks, something that was to deeply embarrass the force in later years.

CHAPTER 9

INTERNMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Frank Hadesbeck's first assignment for the Security Service in 1941 was to provide a list containing the names of about two hundred Communist Party members in Calgary. He worked from a list bearing the title "Names of C.P. members taken from the books of Ben Swankey, 1940 when the C.P. went underground."[1] Swankey's case is instructive in understanding how the Security Service dealt with Communist Party leaders. He was not in Calgary when Hadesbeck supplied the list because he had been interned in Kananaskis, about eighty kilometres to the west in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Swankey, who was born in 1914, grew up in rural Manitoba and small-town Saskatchewan. As a teenager, he hitchhiked to Vancouver, where he witnessed police cracking heads with wooden clubs during a peace demonstration. He joined the Communist Party soon after. Swankey later moved to Edmonton, where he became a trusted party militant. In the fall of 1939, the party sent him as an organizer to Crowsnest, a coal-mining area near Lethbridge, where there was a strong communist presence. Early in 1940, the party dispatched him to Calgary to lead the party there. He was later to become leader of the Labour Progressive Party in Alberta.

Swankey returned to his rooming house one day to find it teeming with plainclothes police who had turned his room upside down. They seized some

anti-war pamphlets, and Swankey was charged with distributing them. He was found not guilty, but upon walking out of the courtroom, he was immediately rearrested and sent to Kananaskis. The camp contained not only communists but also German and Italian Canadians who had been identified as fascists. There was an uneasy relationship between the groups.[2]

Other names to appear on the list Hadesbeck turned over to the RCMP were those of Pat Lenihan and his wife Ann. Pat Lenihan had immigrated to Canada from Ireland in 1923 and joined the Communist Party. He was active in Alberta organizing workers, farmers, and the unemployed. In 1932 he was charged with unlawful assembly. He spent a year in prison but remained undaunted. In 1938, Lenihan was elected as a city councillor in Calgary, running on a communist slate. In 1940, his municipal career was cut short when he, like Swankey, was arrested and interned at Kananaskis. Both men were later sent to camps in Petawawa, Ontario, and Hull, Quebec.[3]

Canadian communists like Lenihan and Swankey, even though they were far from the centres of power, were the victims of international politics. In the 1930s war clouds were gathering over Europe. Communists in Canada had been warning for years about the danger from fascism. Hundreds of them volunteered to fight in Spain, and many paid with their lives. The Canadian government not only remained on the sidelines but also made it illegal for Canadians to fight in the war.

The Soviets had watched with growing alarm as Hitler was elected in 1933 and seized dictatorial power soon after. The Nazis were murderously anti-communist. The Soviets were also worried about Hitler’s policy of Lebensraum, or “living space.” Germany intended to expand into countries populated by Slavic people and Jews, whom Hitler considered inferior humans. The plan was to subjugate and, in the case of the Jews, exterminate them.

In March 1938, Hitler annexed Austria. In September, he threatened to invade Sudetenland, the western border area between Czechoslovakia and Germany, which contained a sizable population of ethnic Germans. Stalin proposed joint military action to help the Czechs against Hitler, but he was ignored by the other great powers, who considered him to be a greater enemy than Hitler. The British, French, and Czechs negotiated the Munich Pact allowing Hitler to seize Sudetenland in return for a promise that he

would stop there. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain famously said that the negotiators had achieved “peace for our time.”

The British and French, who maintained an iron grip on their colonies, were hardly acting on pacifist sentiment, but they feared Hitler and tried to appease him. It did not work. Later in 1938 Germany seized the remainder of Czechoslovakia and threatened Poland. Great Britain pledged to come to Poland’s aid if it was attacked by Germany.

Then, in August 1939, the Soviet Union and Germany stunned everyone by signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the men who negotiated it. The pact renounced warfare between the two countries. It meant, in effect, that the Soviets would not interfere if the Germans invaded Poland. Stalin believed that in this way he could avoid, or at least forestall, a war with Germany. But the pact went further. It contained a secret protocol dividing Poland between them, and allowing the Soviet Union to annex Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and northeastern Romania.

Germany invaded Poland from the west on September 1, 1939. Within days, Britain and France declared war; Canada followed on September 10. The Germans immediately began rounding up and killing Jews and other Poles. Then, in mid-September, the Red Army invaded Poland from the east. In March 1940, the Soviet forces shot twenty-two thousand soldiers and intellectuals in what came to be called the Katyn massacre. It was meant to wipe out the military and intellectual leadership in Poland.[4]

In August 1939, many communists in Canada, including Ben Swankey, were ready to go to war against fascism, but the Comintern decreed otherwise due to the Soviet Union’s non-aggression pact with Germany. The Canadian party was told to treat the war as an imperialist struggle being fought among capitalist powers. The party dutifully opposed Canadian involvement in the war. The government responded by using the *War Measures Act* to declare the Communist Party an illegal organization. Ottawa interned more than one hundred leading communists, including Swankey and Lenihan. Others went underground or fled the country. Swankey was to say much later in life that the party’s decision in 1939 to oppose Canada’s participation in the war “was a serious mistake, perhaps the most serious in its history.”[5]

In June 1941, within a year of the internment of Swankey and Lenihan, Germany turned on Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. The Comintern

shifted gears and declared that the war had become an anti-fascist struggle. The Canadian party reversed itself. It organized a Total War Committee, supported military conscription, and called upon labour to make a no-strike pledge for the duration of the conflict.

There remains an academic debate about whether, over the years, communist parties in the West followed a line dictated by the Comintern centred in Moscow, or if they took a more independent stance. That is not a debate that can be settled here, but to all appearances the Canadian party, at least at the leadership level, took its cues from Moscow. It may well be that activists at the local level did not always accept, or adhere to, positions taken by the party's leaders. But in the eyes of the Canadian government, not to mention the Canadian public, the party was personified in its long-time leader Tim Buck and a small group around him. They followed the Moscow line.[6]

In March 1942, Hadesbeck's name appeared along with others in Calgary, including the local Chamber of Commerce, as attending a meeting to support conscription in a national referendum then under way.[7] The Communist Party also launched a civil rights campaign to have interned communists released and the ban on the party lifted. The endeavour was called the National Conference for Democratic Rights. The NCDR's supporters went well beyond communists to include a wide array of progressives and civil libertarians.

The Canadian Communist Party's decision to reverse itself and support the war made little difference to the RCMP, which maintained its constant surveillance. In December 1941, Hadesbeck provided a list of about thirty-five members of the NCDR's Calgary branch. His own name was on that list, as was that of Ann Lenihan. Pat Lenihan was by then interned. Soon after, Hadesbeck provided a much longer four-page list with the names of more than two hundred people who had signed an earlier petition to have the detainees released.[8]

When the NCDR organized a conference at the Château Laurier Hotel in Ottawa in March 1942, Hadesbeck was one of four Albertans among the delegates. Publicly, he was advocating for the release of Swankey, Lenihan, and the others, but he was, at the same time, informing the RCMP about the NCDR campaign. His registration form at the conference described him as

chair of the NCDR's Calgary branch and of the Southern Alberta coordinating committee. He was listed as a meat-packing plant worker.[9] Other Alberta delegates included representatives from the Alberta Farmers Union and the United Mineworkers.

The NCDR described the internees as anti-fascists and said that seventy of them were incarcerated in Hull, just across the river from Ottawa. The conference sessions and an associated public meeting also heard from the wives of some of the men interned, including Ben Swankey's spouse, Anne. They described the trauma surrounding the arrests and the difficulties that internment created for their families.[10]

On the day following the conference, a forty-member NCDR delegation met with Louis St. Laurent, the minister of justice. Hadesbeck was among the delegates. The minister apologized for the absence of Prime Minister King, who, he said, was too busy to attend. The delegation presented a ten-page brief calling for release of the detainees, a parliamentary review of the Defence of Canada Regulations, and continuing mobilization in the war against the fascist powers.[11]

Years later in an interview with Otto Driedger, Hadesbeck said that St. Laurent began by asking to be introduced to everyone in the delegation. Hadesbeck believed that St. Laurent gave him a conspiratorial smile along with his friendly handshake: "You know, I think he knew that I was there and what I was doing there, because when I looked him right straight in the eye, and he looked me right straight in the eye and we both smiled. He never smiled for anybody else, so they can't tell me that he didn't know. I told my RCMP contact when I got back. He says it couldn't possibly be. St. Laurent didn't know who the heck was there."

DELEGATION TO THE GOVERNMENT, RECEIVED BY THE
MINISTER OF JUSTICE, FROM THE NATIONAL
CONFERENCE FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.
Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Feb. 25TH -1942
Alexander Art Studio
OTTAWA
ONT.

Delegates to National Conference for Democratic Rights, Ottawa, 1942. Frank Hadesbeck in back row centre, sixth from left. Courtesy Richard Blayone.

A black-and-white photo taken on the day of the meeting shows members of the NCDR group posing in a wood-panelled room. The men, including Hadesbeck, are all wearing suits and ties, and the women their best dresses. Hadesbeck expressed amusement to Driedger about the Security Service paying for him to attend the conference: “That’s where some of your tax money went. I went to Ottawa. There was no reason for that. I was in Calgary. Surely, they had a special agent in Ottawa who could have covered that.”

Eventually the internees were released one at a time or in small groups. Swankey emerged from the camp in the late summer of 1942. He returned to Edmonton, which had been his home before the party had sent him to Blairmore and Calgary. When Swankey arrived at the station, six hundred people were waiting to greet him. Soon after, he joined the armed forces and

was sent to England.[12] Other internees, including Lenihan, tried to enlist but were turned away.

The RCMP kept the NCDR and the Communist Party under scrutiny, in Calgary and elsewhere. Members knew that they were being infiltrated, and that fed suspicion and paranoia on their part. Anyone among them could be an informant. Hadesbeck had a plan to deflect suspicion: “To maintain my cover,” he explained, “I tried to get the leaders of the party in the west to think that I was just another run-of-the-mill party supporter, that I was poor and as a result made very small cash contributions. I misspelled words in my written articles to Communist Party meetings and the party press, and harped on the subject that our Canadian law enforcement is completely out of control and in the hands of the national security forces. That they were just a group of bureaucratic officers who put themselves above the law of Canada and not responsible to anyone. The fact that I had fought in the Spanish War assisted me in maintaining my credibility as a member of the Party. In the years I was involved my cover was never blown.”

As we shall see, that was not true.

CHAPTER 10

A MARRIED MAN

Frank Hadesbeck's time in Calgary also coincided with a change in his marital status. On May 17, 1941, he and Bernadette Dobie were married in St. Mary's Roman Catholic cathedral. The ceremony occurred on his thirty-fifth birthday. She was thirty-three. It was odd that someone recently accepted into the Communist Party, which was officially atheist and whose members believed religion to be a distraction at best, would get married in a Catholic church. Likely, Hadesbeck kept this information from his comrades. The registration of their marriage described him as a Catholic and a labourer who worked in a meat-packing plant. She was described as Catholic and a widow. Her family name was Blayone.[1]

There exists a sepia-tinted wedding photo of the couple standing before a replica of two indoor classical columns. He is wearing a suit, perhaps brown, with a vest and tie and a white boutonniere on his lapel. His hair is short and combed to the side, his hairline receding. His face appears open and friendly, with the hint of a smile. She is half a head shorter and of a darker complexion. Her hair is waved and combed back, mostly to one side. She, too, wears a light smile. Hers is not a typical bridal dress. It is long sleeved and padded at the shoulders, a dress that she might wear again for social occasions. She is wearing a brooch high on her breast, and it gathers the dress upward toward the clasp. She is holding a bouquet of roses.

Bernadette was close to several nieces later in life, but they do not know how or when she met Frank Hadesbeck or why she was living in Calgary.

Bernadette was born into a large family of French-speaking Catholics who were farmers near Balcarres, Saskatchewan, just to the north of the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Blayones were a clan, in contrast to Hadesbeck's smaller, more dispersed family.[2]

Frank and Bernadette Hadesbeck wedding photo, Calgary, 1941. Courtesy Richard Blayone.

Bernadette's father, Joseph Jr., was born in Manitoba in 1871. That was two years after the Métis, led by Louis Riel, established a provisional government amid controversy and violence. When Joseph was a child, his father, also named Joseph, moved with his family to the Fort Qu'Appelle area and settled on a homestead. Joseph Jr.'s wife Mary Jane Kelly was the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. The young couple settled on a nearby

farmstead of their own. They had eleven children, of whom Bernadette was the eighth.

Canadian census reports between 1901 and 1921 provide a snapshot of Joseph Jr. and his family. He kept horses, milk cows, and cattle. He spoke both English and French and could read and write. Joseph Jr., his wife Mary Jane, and their children lived in a log house with four rooms. In 1921, the census added a category entitled Racial or Tribal Origin. Joseph Blayone was described as "Half-Breed," an out-of-date term; a better descriptor today would be Métis.[3] Bernadette's niece, Phyllis Pederson, says the family was aware of that heritage and proud of it.[4]

Bernadette was born in 1908 and christened in the Catholic church at Lebret. Sacred Heart was a francophone parish with a significant Métis population, and the record of her baptism was written in French. She became and remained a committed Catholic throughout her life. The census report for 1916 indicated that, at age eight, Bernadette could speak, read, and write in both French and English. The 1921 census described her as Métis and as a Roman Catholic. Twenty years later, the local priest wrote into the parish log, in French, that Bernadette had married Frank Hadesbeck at St. Mary's cathedral in Calgary.[5]

Bernadette had been married previously to Alexander Dobie, a Scot who immigrated to Canada in 1928 at age twenty-three.[6] Theirs was a brief, three-year marriage. Alexander Dobie died in May 1936 at age thirty, likely from tuberculosis.[7]

Hadesbeck told Otto Driedger in 1987: "I got married against the RCMP's wishes. They didn't like it at all. But there was nothing they could do about it." Until the 1970s, members of the force had to serve for several years before they were allowed to marry. Their superior officers said they needed recruits to be mobile. Marriage and families were considered a hindrance.[8] Hadesbeck was not a member of the RCMP, much as he might have liked to be, so the force could not prevent his marriage.

Bernadette Hadesbeck may or may not have known about her husband's secret role with the RCMP prior to their marriage. She later became extremely anxious about it and hated the part she was expected to play as the spouse of a party member. At some point, she refused to continue attending the frequent social events and functions, and her husband had to make excuses.[9] Her anxiety was well founded.

According to Hadesbeck's description, late in 1941 a party member named George Stark accused him of being an RCMP informant.[10] Stark's name surfaced on various occasions, and he was clearly a militant. He was listed as a member of the party and a donor in various documents that Hadesbeck forwarded to his handlers. In 1934, the *Calgary Herald* reported that George Stark had been charged with disorderly conduct following a disturbance at a relief kitchen. He requested that the hearing of his case be delayed until he could seek advice from the Canadian Labour Defence League, a communist front group.[11] Stark's name also appeared in the *RCMP Security Bulletin* for 1937, where he was described as speaking at a mass meeting for the Calgary unemployed.[12] In 1939, the *Herald* reported that Stark had spoken at a meeting calling for the establishment of a citizens' board to make recommendations to governments about how to solve unemployment.[13]

Hadesbeck described Stark's accusation to Otto Driedger: "He figured that he had the goods on me and that he knew who I was and what I was doing. So I hauled him up to the party platform and asked him to tell the executive just what he has against me and why and where he got his goods, and he started to stutter. He was a staunch party member, and he was one of the few I ran across who I thought would murder me if he had to."

P. LENIHAN

The PEOPLE'S CANDIDATE
FOR ALDERMAN
VOTE THUS:

Lenihan, Patrick	**1**

VOTE FOR:

1. **Democratic Tax Reform.**
2. **Businesslike Civic Financing.**
3. **Sound Administration.**
4. **Better Housing Standards.**
5. **Work Projects for the Unemployed.**

IN SHORT -
A NEW DEAL FOR CALGARY.

- Issued by -
CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE
328 Eighth Ave. East. Phone M 1435.

Election poster for Patrick Lenihan in Calgary, 1938. Lenihan orchestrated Frank Hadesbeck's expulsion from the Communist Party. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, University of Calgary (CU1101031).

What Hadesbeck did not mention to Driedger is that he was eventually expelled from the Labour Progressive Party in 1945. The reasons are not clear, although there are a few scattered letters among his papers in the Saskatchewan archives dealing with the matter. In late April 1945, Hadesbeck wrote to Pat Lenihan, who was chairing the LPP's city commission. Lenihan, after his release from internment in 1942, returned to Calgary and began to work for the city. He became politically active again and was later hired as a provincial organizer for the party.

Hadesbeck, in his letter, said that he wanted to contest his expulsion at a trial that had been presided over by Lenihan. Hadesbeck wrote: "I hereby serve you notice to proceed with the full publication of the evidence against me, as was brought up at the trial and any other questions that have come up since that may be on the commission's minds and that they may want me to answer." Hadesbeck wanted his trial to occur before a full membership, implying that the earlier event had been held in secret or among only a small group of members.[14] In May, Gordon Martin, described as the local secretary of the LPP, sent a letter in response. He wrote: "I am instructed by the commission to inform you that charges will be laid and that you will be able to appear before the East Calgary Club, LPP at a suitable time."[15]

In August, Hadesbeck wrote to Sam Carr, a national organizer for the LPP who lived in Toronto. Hadesbeck told Carr that the party in Alberta was a mess owing to poor leadership: "I was bold enough to offer some constructive criticism for the good of the working-class movement and was not in agreement with certain actions of the provincial leadership (as were many others of a like mind but who kept their mouths shut). Because of this I was, to speak plainly, thrown out of the movement without any reasons of a sensible nature being given me. Nor was my branch notified that I was let out. Nor was I given a chance for an open trial before my branch membership."[16]

In a likely reference to Lenihan, Hadesbeck wrote: "It is unfortunate that a man who wrecked the former Communist Party in Calgary and who was expelled for drunkenness and general bad conduct should again be in a position to remove those who might oppose him in any way." Carr

responded several weeks later in August with a terse letter saying that he would be in Calgary in the fall and Hadesbeck could meet with him then.[17]

Hadesbeck's criticism of Lenihan's drinking was accurate. By his own admission, Lenihan had a drinking problem. He was later to be expelled from the party for being intoxicated and for missing meetings. News of his expulsion even appeared as a front-page news story in the *Herald* in September 1946.[18]

There is no paper trail to indicate what happened at Hadesbeck's trial. There is only one oblique and undated remark found in his memoir notes about the expulsion, presumably indicating that the RCMP had dropped him: "The need for my services were no longer needed since I was expelled from the party." Although there is no record, the trial could have been vicious and potentially traumatic. Vivian Gornick, an American writer raised in a communist family in New York City in the 1940s, interviewed many former party members years later for a book she was writing. Among the most painful memories she heard about were the expulsion trials that some had experienced. The member would be summoned to a meeting and told to sit in a chair in the middle of a room with others seated in a circle around them. Then the accusations would begin, some made by leading cadres, but others by people the offending members had considered to be their closest friends.[19]

These actions arose from the party's experience of being an underground entity going back to its origins in Russia, and to the relentless campaign against North American communists during the Cold War. In a closely held community like the local party, the fallout from these bare-knuckled trials could be devastating for years to come. If Hadesbeck was suspected of being an RCMP source, he would have committed the most hated of betrayals.

Hadesbeck and Bernadette left Calgary for Regina in June 1946 and purchased a home there in the same month. Hadesbeck remained in contact with officer J. J. Campbell, his favourite handler in the Security Service. Campbell was helpful in sending some freelance work his way in Regina. In Hadesbeck's files, there are three letters from Campbell in September 1946.[20] He wrote to say he was returning a favour to a civilian contact who

had supplied him with occasional information. “Actually, the whole business is no concern of mine and does not interest me,” Campbell wrote, “but I thought that it might be to our advantage and would be a paying holiday for you.”

Hadesbeck was to undertake surveillance on an individual for seven to ten days. “The main thing,” Campbell wrote, “would be to see where this bird goes and the number of hours he spends in the office. He apparently does not do any selling himself but is the field manager.” Campbell instructed Hadesbeck to send him daily reports by airmail, which Campbell would provide to someone within the company. “I will fix them up for you and pass them on.”

Campbell did not sign the letters in his own name, but Hadesbeck jotted Campbell’s name on one of them. Hadesbeck also wrote the words “re Fuller Brush Co,” which likely indicated that he was to stake out a company employee. Fuller Brush had travelling door-to-door sales representatives working entirely on commission to sell hairbrushes, mops, brooms, and cosmetics. The company had a small office in Regina.

One of Campbell’s letters was unsigned and ended with the instruction “Burn this stuff, eh?” One of the others was signed as “Karl Marx” and a third as “Stalin.” The letters are illuminating for several reasons. They reveal a continuing relationship between a Security Service officer and an informant. They show the informal way in which the trading of information worked, in this case between the officer and a contact in the business world. The letters also indicate that Hadesbeck was in transition. He had been expelled from the party. That compromised his usefulness to the RCMP, so he was no longer working as an informant. His wife had always been unhappy about the double life he was leading, so she would have been relieved.

Whatever the reason for his relocation, Hadesbeck’s time in Calgary between 1941 and 1946 coincided with seismic national and international events. Canada was at war throughout much of that period. As it became clear that Hitler and Mussolini would lose, there were increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and the other great powers, who had always been uneasy allies. By 1946, the Cold War had begun, and it was much in evidence in Saskatchewan when Hadesbeck and Bernadette returned.

CHAPTER 11

COMMUNISTS VERSUS SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

The Saskatchewan wing of the Labour Progressive Party held its annual convention in Saskatoon early in November 1946. Those attending were faced by grim new realities. In August 1945, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which alarmed the Soviets and initiated a nuclear arms race. The next month Igor Gouzenko, a clerk in the embassy in Ottawa, defected, carrying with him documents that revealed extensive Soviet espionage in Canada and other Western countries. The Soviets were pursuing information about North American technology, including the bomb. Gouzenko's defection placed Canada on the front lines of an emerging Cold War.

The hunt was on for collaborators. There ensued a determined search for communists in government, the labour movement, media, academia, and elsewhere. The lives, and livelihoods, of many people were affected. Fred Rose, a member of Parliament from Montreal, was among those charged with passing state secrets to the Soviets. A member of the LPP, he had won a Montreal by-election in 1943 and was re-elected in 1945. After his trial in 1946, he was sent to prison. The arrest of Rose and several others for passing information to the Soviets augmented RCMP suspicions about the Canadian party. By then it was only a waning presence in Canadian politics,

but the police believed its members would assist in recruiting agents who would use their positions to pass information to the Soviets.[1]

The Rose case and the emerging Cold War cast a pall over members of the LPP, including the small core of loyal supporters meeting in Saskatoon. The RCMP had the convention under surveillance. A three-page secret report provided by the Saskatoon detachment said there were 135 registered delegates. The information in the document was likely provided by someone from within the group. An outsider would have been conspicuous.[2]

Hadesbeck moved back to Regina earlier that same year but had not yet re-engaged with the party. He would, however, have been familiar with many of those attending the convention from his undercover work in Calgary. Their names were among those that appeared on the hundreds of index cards and other documents that Hadesbeck had prepared for the Security Service while he lived in Calgary.

The convention chair was Maynard Woollard. He had belonged to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in the 1930s but became impatient with the CCF and joined the Communist Party as an organizer. After the party was banned in 1940, he went into hiding in Saskatchewan. When the internments ended, he surfaced and ran for the LPP in the 1944 provincial election.

The meeting's recording secretary was Gladys Macdonald, a Saskatoon woman who had been interned in 1940. Josephine Gehl oversaw the registration committee. She had come to Hadesbeck's attention when she lived in Calgary earlier in the 1940s but was now back in Saskatchewan. Gehl and two of her sisters were deeply involved in the Saskatchewan party. One of them had been interned for ten months. In old-line political parties, the participation of women was rare. For the communists, it was common.[3]

The convention had five discussion panels. Norman Brudy led the discussion on trade unions. He was a veteran party member, a provincial party organizer, and a candidate in numerous elections. Alex Theodore of Regina, another long-time communist and provincial organizer, moderated the panel on education. Florence Theodore, his spouse, guided the women's work panel. She had served as leader of the party in Saskatchewan and was interned for six months early in the war.

The panel on youth work was led by Tillie Taylor. The daughter of prominent Saskatoon lawyer Jacob Goldenberg, she was active in the anti-war movement in the 1930s and became a member of the Communist Party while in her teens. She met and married George Taylor, whose family were dedicated communists who had immigrated to Canada from Wales. George Taylor, like Hadesbeck, fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.[4] The young couple lived in Calgary for a time while Hadesbeck was there. Their names were on the lists that Hadesbeck shared with the RCMP.

The agriculture panel at the LPP convention was led by William Berezowsky, a farmer and rural municipal councillor active in his community in East Central Saskatchewan. He was born in Ukraine and immigrated to Canada with his family as a young child. Nelson Clarke presented the leader's report. Born in Regina, Clarke had studied at the university in Saskatoon, where he edited the student newspaper. In 1941, he was elected to Saskatoon's city council at age twenty-seven. He ran as an LPP candidate in the 1944 provincial election.

Another speaker at the convention was former member of Parliament Dorise Nielsen. A farm woman from Saskatchewan, she was active in the provincial CCF before secretly joining the Communist Party in 1937. In 1940, she ran for office as an independent, drawing support from CCF, Social Credit, and communists to defeat the Liberal incumbent. When the Communist Party was banned in 1940 and many of its leaders interned, Nielsen became an articulate spokesperson for their release.[5] According to Hadesbeck's notes, she once stayed at his home in Calgary while she was a member of Parliament. He was her driver when she went to speak to a group of miners.

Nielsen and Berezowsky personify the relationship between communists and the CCF in their competition for dominance among progressives. Berezowsky ran as an LPP candidate in the 1944 and 1948 provincial elections, but both times he was defeated easily by the CCF. By 1952, he switched his allegiance, ran as a CCF candidate in the election, and won. He remained a member of the provincial legislature for three decades. Berezowsky and others, including George and Tillie Taylor, chose to abandon the Communist Party for the CCF.[6]

Dorise Nielsen made a different choice in leaving the CCF for the Communist Party. Although she was a party member, she kept that a secret

in the 1940 election. But the LPP leadership instructed her in 1943, while she was a sitting member of Parliament, to publicly declare her allegiance. She agreed only reluctantly because she believed it would cost her the next election, and it did. By 1946, she was working for the party in Toronto but was given only a minor role. Frustrated, she later moved to China, where she lived and worked until her death in 1980. Hers was a lonely existence on the margins of Chinese society, but she never gave up on communism.[7]

Saskatchewan, like Alberta, had a radical tradition. In both provinces the Great Depression was accompanied by almost a decade of drought. The hardship generated a search for alternatives. In Saskatchewan, the most enduring response was social democratic, not Marxist. The two groups shared a class analysis of society but differed fundamentally about how to respond. Social democrats drew their inspiration mainly from British Fabian socialism and the Protestant social gospel. They were committed to parliamentary democracy. Communists were officially scornful of liberal democracy and transactional in their approach to it. They believed change would come about only through revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. They considered themselves to be a disciplined vanguard that would act as the catalyst for that revolution.

The Soviet-dominated Comintern came to believe after about 1928 that a “third period” had arrived in which the weaknesses inherent in capitalism would undermine the system, leading to increasing class conflict and greater support for communism. Sensing victory for their cause, the Comintern instructed communist parties to reject any collaboration with socialists or social democrats.[8]

The national CCF came into being at a 1932 founding convention in Calgary. There was another meeting in Regina the following year, which produced a manifesto saying that no CCF government would rest content until it had eradicated capitalism. The Canadian establishment was alarmed. Political opponents and business leaders accused the CCF of being communist. But the social democrats were attacked even more vociferously by leaders of the Communist Party, who described the CCF as “social reformists,” “social fascists,” and “traitors to the working class.”[9]

All of that changed with the rise of fascism in Europe and the Soviets' fear that Hitler would attack them. Confronted by that threat, the Comintern pivoted in 1935 to call for a common front strategy that would engage progressives in any country and of practically any description in the struggle against fascism. The Canadian party began to approach social democrats and other progressives. The CCF leadership firmly refused any such overtures. Leader J. S. Woodsworth even dismissed the party's Ontario executive in 1934 because he believed it had been infiltrated by communists.

In 1931, the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada decided to go into politics. Farmers made common cause with a much smaller group of urban workers to create the Farmer Labour Party. Together they advocated for the public ownership of resources and a public lend-lease program for farmland. The party did not do well in the 1934 election. Before the next campaign in 1938, it dropped many of its more radical policies and adopted the CCF name. In 1944, the CCF swept to power under the leadership of Tommy Douglas, the Baptist preacher and member of Parliament who had returned to lead the provincial party.

It is clear, but only in hindsight, that social democrats in Saskatchewan prevailed over the communists in the contest for influence on the left. Norman Penner spent much of his youth as a Communist Party member and organizer in Winnipeg prior to becoming an academic. He describes the choice in this way: "While liberal and radical Canadians were prepared to accept the militant type of activity which the [Communist] Party epitomized, especially during the Depression, they were not prepared to accept a revolutionary solution."[10]

It is debatable, however, whether rank-and-file members of the party were committed to the violent overthrow of the state. Most of them lived far from headquarters in Toronto and farther still from Moscow. They were more concerned about immediate issues, such as unemployment and the government's indifference to their precarious existence. A number of those attending the LPP convention in Saskatoon had run for office at various levels, although they seldom won. In time, many left the party and joined the CCF, where they became known as the old left.

The Security Service never wavered in its suspicions. It remained skeptical about any avowed change of heart among former communists, and

maintained a watchful eye on both communists and social democrats, often by deploying informants like Frank Hadesbeck.

CHAPTER 12

COLD WAR IN SASKATCHEWAN

When he returned to Regina in 1946, Frank Hadesbeck had been away for more than a dozen years. He had grown up in and around the city until age thirteen before leaving for the US. He had come back for a few years early in the 1930s before leaving again for Lethbridge and Taber, Alberta. Following his return to Canada from Spain in early 1939, Hadesbeck stopped briefly in the city but continued to Lethbridge, where he was recruited by the RCMP. He spent the years between 1940 and 1946 in Calgary.

The move back to Regina must have been a homecoming for Bernadette Hadesbeck. She was from a family of eleven with many nieces and nephews, several of whom she was close to. One niece, Anne Moxon, recalls her excitement as a child when her family from the country would visit the Hadesbecks in Regina. “They always lived in a comfortable home and had a good vehicle. When we were children, we got to ride in the car when visiting.”[1] Phyllis Pederson, another niece on the Blayone side of the family, had a close and continuing relationship with the Hadesbecks. Her father fought in the Second World War, and upon his return to Saskatchewan he never again lived with the family. Her mother became a single parent. “Uncle Frank and Bernadette were very supportive of us,” she told me. “They had no children and made it a point to stay in touch with nieces and nephews on both sides.”[2]

In his handwritten notes later in life, Hadesbeck said that he took a break from RCMP activity after leaving Calgary. That claim is borne out by a chronology of his occupations assembled by Pederson. Hadesbeck's work history between 1946 and 1952 was, once again, peripatetic.[3] In September 1946, he bought a Caterpillar equipped with a brush cutter to clear land for farmers in the Balcarres area, where members of Bernadette's family lived. Pederson's document indicates that he hurt his back in the same month, and that in February 1947 he had surgery in Edmonton and then spent several weeks in hospital.[4] He was off for eight months until June 1947, when he went back to work in Regina as a mechanic. In 1949, he placed an advertisement in the *Leader-Post* offering to sell his brush clearing equipment, including two Caterpillars and a plow, trailer, and half-ton truck. The advertisement said that he was selling due to poor health.[5]

Frank Hadesbeck in Regina, 1950s. After several difficult years in Regina, Hadesbeck enjoyed a comfortable life. Courtesy Phyllis Pederson.

By 1950, after a series of short-term jobs, Hadesbeck was working for the Bechtel & Mannix company in pipeline construction. He wrote a letter in January 1951, complaining that he had been underpaid in his role as a foreman on a project. The company responded that he was paid what he had been promised.[6] Later, Hadesbeck had a succession of other jobs spread

across southern Saskatchewan, which would have meant being away from his wife much of the time.

When they arrived in Regina in June 1946, Frank and Bernadette Hadesbeck immediately purchased a house on the western outskirts of the city, just a stone's throw from the railroad tracks. On the property deeds, he is listed as a mechanic and she as a housewife. A year later, in June 1947, they sold it.[7] The couple purchased a second Regina property in 1948. It was owned by the city, which had placed a tax lien on it. The lien was lifted with the purchase.[8]

A letter in Hadesbeck's file from his friendly RCMP contact J. J. Campbell may help to explain the sale of one home and the purchase of a second. On February 18, 1947, Campbell responded to a letter that Hadesbeck had sent a week earlier. This was shortly before he went to Edmonton for back surgery. Hadesbeck had obviously asked Campbell for help in getting a war veteran's grant to purchase a residential lot. Under the *Veterans' Land Act*, the Department of Veterans' Affairs provided a benefit to help soldiers make the transition back to civilian life. That included helping with the purchase of farmland, homes, or businesses.

Campbell wrote in response: "Well, Frank, about your buying lots down there. As far as I am concerned personally, I just don't carry enough weight to do much but I would suggest that you get in touch with the officer commanding K Division, Edmonton and ask him for a statement to the effect that you were with the outfit during the war years. Don't say anything more than that, just that you want it for your own satisfaction. What they don't know does no harm, see? So I hope that you are successful in your quest and that you get your lots OK."[9] The wartime service to which Campbell referred must have been Hadesbeck's work as an informant for the Security Service, because he was not in the armed forces during the Second World War.

Campbell suggested that Hadesbeck contact the RCMP's commanding officer in Alberta. Hadesbeck may or may not have known that this was none other than Herbert Darling, who had recruited him as a source in 1940. Darling was assigned to Edmonton in 1945. There is no documentation to indicate that Darling, or the RCMP, helped Hadesbeck with his housing request. But in a handwritten note to his file from the early 1950s, Hadesbeck wrote: "They made it possible for me to purchase a lot under the

soldiers' purchase plan at a reduced price because of my wartime service."[10] The rationale would have been that he qualified because of his role as an informant, not a soldier.

Hadesbeck's venture into a business to clear brush for farmers did not work out, but something else did. In his notes, he wrote: "A Mr. White phoned me saying he would need me to do some work for him in Regina. He also said that he was with the Security Service of the RCMP." *Henderson's Directory* for Regina had listings over the years for John M. White, first as an RCMP constable and later as a corporal. White joined the force in Regina at age eighteen and served there for his entire career. He retired in 1956 and later worked for the Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office.[11]

White's offer would have involved informing upon the local Communist Party. Hadesbeck had to join the party in Regina, and he did. How could that happen, since he had been expelled in Calgary? It is possible that he was banished for some offence less serious than being an informant. He had, after all, been critical of the provincial leadership. But there is also another possibility, as unlikely as it sounds.

Constant RCMP surveillance kept people in the party on edge, but they also knew that the police would often spread false information about members, alleging that they were informants. This was meant to feed the party's paranoia, but it could have had unintended consequences. If everyone was suspect, then no one was entirely suspect. The party was also in decline and desperate to recruit members. Ed Lehman joined as a youth in the 1970s. He told me, "The party in Regina was small and every member was valued. Frank was a regular, he listened intently at meetings and gatherings, he always paid his dues, and he had a good record in Spain."[12]

Hadesbeck's papers at the provincial archives contain some of his party membership booklets, complete with stamps indicating that he did, indeed, pay his dues. In a note that he jotted in 1955, he described membership in the party as an immersion experience: "Party meetings are carefully planned and skillfully staged. These meetings and socials are a must for all

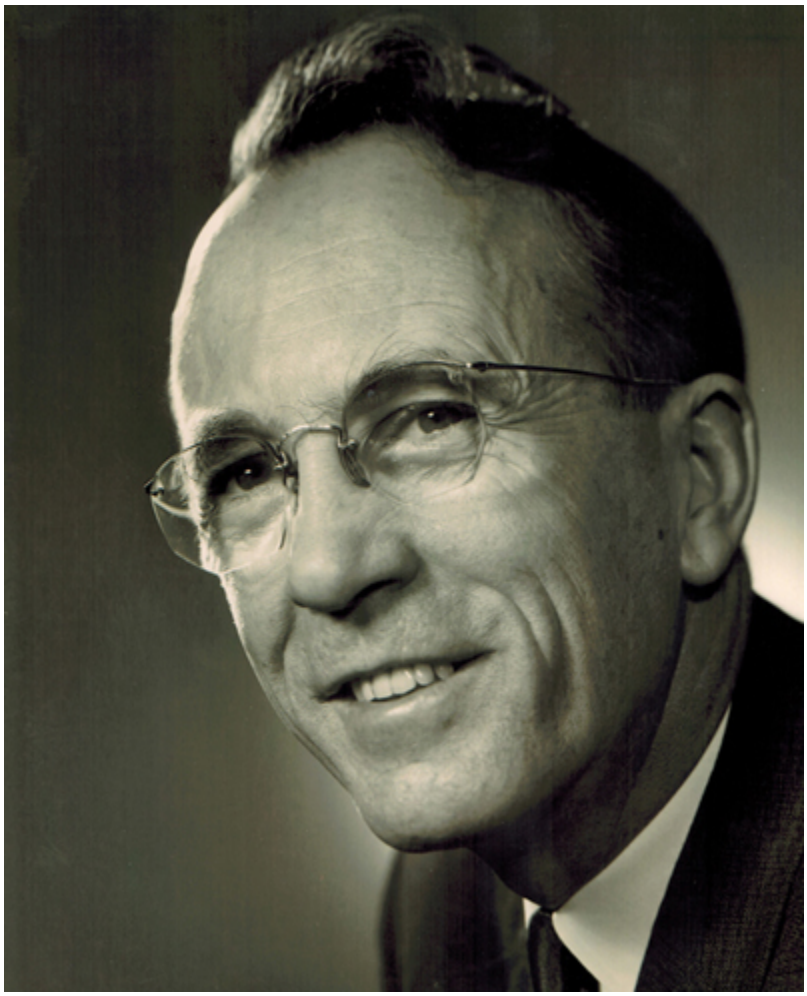
members and do bring out as many non-party members as possible to party sponsored public meetings, rallies, and protest marches."

This level of activity is consistent with existing research. In *The Communist Party in Canada*, Ivan Avakumovic notes: "The party saw to it that recruits were not kept idle … the time devoted to demonstrations, meetings, picketing, the sale of party newspapers, fund raising, the collections of signatures for petitions, and service on delegations to this or that institution, left scant leisure time for soul searching or private recreation."[13]

After 1952, Hadesbeck finally settled into a long-term job with the General Tractor Supply and Machine Shop in Regina. The shop was owned by brothers Sam and David Shragge, whose main business was selling steel. General Tractor was a sideline for them, and Hadesbeck was the lone employee. His job was to locate farm tractors that had been, or were about to be, junked and to salvage them for used parts that could be resold. Hadesbeck worked there for twenty years.

The job, which Hadesbeck found for himself, was ideal for an RCMP informant. His membership in the Communist Party would have been noticed in a small city like Regina. If he had co-workers, the Cold War conversations in the lunchroom would have been tense. He was able to avoid that tension by being a solitary and self-directed employee.

Sam Shragge's son Sherv left Regina in the mid-1950s to study photojournalism in California. He later worked in radio in British Columbia before returning home in 1965. Sherv Shragge was in the family business, but eventually he also hosted a popular open-line radio program. Following his morning radio shift, he would return to selling steel. He dropped in at General Tractor several times a week, where he encountered Hadesbeck. "He was a nice guy, very co-operative," Shragge recalled in an interview. "He would go out into the country and wheel and deal with farmers. He would pick up old tractors on a flatbed truck and bring them back here to take apart. He was an extrovert for the most part if you did not talk about the past. Finally, he told me one day that he worked undercover for the RCMP. He did not want to go into it very much, saying that he had made a commitment to his handlers. The McCarthy era in the US made him shy. He did not want to be known as a communist."[14]



Saskatchewan premier Tommy Douglas was the object of RCMP surveillance for decades. Courtesy Saskatchewan New Democratic Party.

The material that I possess covering Hadesbeck's years of undercover work in Regina is not systematic. There is some information about the 1950s, more about the 1960s, and even more about the 1970s. The notes and Watch Out lists in the 1950s show that the RCMP was preoccupied with the peace movement, which they believed to be a communist-controlled Trojan Horse. That suspicion tied into the force's continuing interest in Tommy Douglas.

When Hadesbeck returned to Regina in 1946, Douglas was almost three years into his first term as premier. A small, dapper man who as a student had been a boxing champion in Manitoba, he was a skilled orator and retail politician. It emerged much later, from access to information requests by the Canadian Press, that the RCMP had had Douglas under surveillance since

the 1930s.[15] He was then a young member of Parliament representing Weyburn in southern Saskatchewan.

Douglas came to police attention in 1936 when he represented the CCF at a youth conference held in Geneva, an event that the RCMP believed was communist inspired. Later, when he became Saskatchewan's premier, Douglas often refused to go along with the Cold War drumbeat. That made him suspect in the eyes of the Security Service, who believed, erroneously, that he may once have been a communist or at least a sympathizer.

The RCMP file on Douglas from the 1950s contains numerous reports about his participation in peace-related events. He was outspoken about the war in Korea, an unusual foreign policy excursion for a premier. One of the Secret Service documents referred to a 1951 editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* attacking Douglas for a speech in the legislature about the war. The document's author wrote: "The article accuses Douglas of apologizing for Chinese aggression and willfully distorting the character of the United Nations actions in Korea … and refers to him as leader of a political party which has harboured communists and shown itself extremely susceptible to communist opinions."[16]

The RCMP maintained its secret file on Douglas for forty years. The federal government went to court in the 2000s attempting to prevent much of that file from being released to the Canadian Press. Eventually Library and Archives Canada released 1,141 pages, many of them containing blocks of print that had been blacked out by CSIS censors, and entire pages were excised from documents.

Douglas was accompanied on Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists by dozens of others involved in peace or ban-the-bomb events. The files contain a handwritten list described as Party Fronts; Hadesbeck included on that list the Canadian Peace Congress and the Voice of Women.

The accusation in the Western democracies was that the Soviet Union was intent upon global domination. The Soviets then, like the Russians today, were ruthless in controlling what they considered to be their sphere of influence in central and eastern Europe. But by the mid-1930s they had largely abandoned plans to export revolution to the West. Stalin had consolidated his position as the heir to Lenin and prevailed against his competitors, including Leon Trotsky. Theirs was a naked struggle for power that contained ideological differences. Trotsky believed in supporting

permanent revolution in countries worldwide. Stalin chose the option of building socialism in one country and having communist parties elsewhere support the Soviet Union. Trotsky was stripped of his position, removed from the party, exiled, and eventually, in 1940, murdered in Mexico by one of Stalin's henchmen.

In 1949, the Soviets launched an International Movement for Peace at a congress in Poland. The late American historian Tony Judt maintains that, while the peace movement was ostensibly led by prominent international scientists and intellectuals, its activities were closely controlled by Moscow. He explains: "Under the umbrella of the Peace Movement other front organizations also pressed home the message: the Soviet Union was on the side of peace, while the Americans (and their friends in Korea, Yugoslavia, and Western European governments) were the party of war."[17]

The Soviets' approach toward the movement may have been cynical, but peace held a great appeal for millions of people, including Westerners, who were legitimately concerned about the possibility of nuclear war. The US had dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 and a nuclear arms race was in its early, frightening stages.

The peace movement was active in Saskatchewan, and many members of the CCF were sympathetic to its goals. Douglas and other CCF politicians frequently attended and spoke at peace-related events, and the movement received a sympathetic hearing from them. The Security Service files contain a newspaper clipping from March 1959. The article describes a group of women dressed in black appearing before Douglas and sixteen other members of the Saskatchewan legislature. They asked that a resolution be passed calling for world disarmament and an end to nuclear testing. The women, members of the Saskatchewan Peace Council, wore white sashes along with their black garments bearing slogans such as "No Hiroshima in Saskatchewan" and "Fallout causes cancer."[18]

Douglas was nonplussed by critics who said his attendance at peace events meant that he was soft on communism. He once quipped that it would be a shame to give up on a good cause just because there were communists involved.[19] But as premier, he also crossed swords regularly with Communist Party members in Saskatchewan. On one occasion the party's paper, the *Canadian Tribune*, accused Douglas of siding "with the

warmongers at Ottawa and Washington." This was in reference to his support of the Atlantic Treaty that created NATO.[20]

On another occasion, Nelson Clarke, a Communist Party organizer in Saskatchewan, wrote to Douglas to criticize him for supporting development of the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range, which straddled the northern Saskatchewan-Alberta border. The range was established in 1952 and used by the Department of National Defence for bombing tests involving military jets. Clarke told Douglas that "preparation for war is the surest way of becoming involved in war."

Douglas replied tartly that after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Labour Progressive Party promoted an all-out war effort against the Germans and criticized the CCF for not doing enough to support it. Then Douglas added a barb. "If it was necessary to resist Nazi aggression during the last war," he wrote to Clarke, "it seems to me quite inconsistent that Canada should not be equally prepared to resist totalitarian aggression at the present time or in the future."[21]

The Security Service did not bother much with distinctions between communists and social democrats. The force continued to believe that Douglas was secretly a communist, or at least was unduly influenced by them. As we shall see, Hadesbeck's notes contain the names of many people involved in the peace movement. Even while he was signing petitions published in the local newspaper against the US war in Vietnam in the 1960s, Hadesbeck was providing the RCMP with information about those who signed.[22]

CHAPTER 13

MEDICARE AS COMMUNIST PLOT

Tommy Douglas is often referred to as the father of medicare in Canada. That is an oversimplification, but when he ran for office against the Liberals in the 1944 provincial election, Douglas promised that, once elected, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation would introduce public health care in Saskatchewan. He always insisted that medical care should be available to everyone, including those who could not afford to pay on their own. It took a long while, but on July 1, 1962, the CCF government kept its promise. Visits to the doctor in the province would be tax-financed rather than individuals having to pay out of pocket.

Most doctors did not like the idea. Saying that it would turn them into civil servants and interfere in their relationship with patients, they threatened to strike. Douglas countered that the only thing to change would be the method of payment, with doctors billing the government, rather than patients, for services rendered.

The RCMP imagined communists everywhere, and the force's continuing suspicion of Douglas poisoned its approach toward the introduction of what has become a cherished social program. In July 1962, the RCMP opened a secret file, which I obtained through an access to information request, named "Medicare Plan Sask—Communist Activities Within."[1] The Security Service undertook surveillance of some of medicare's key proponents. Many of those names also appeared on the Watch Out lists

maintained by Hadesbeck, who was involved only marginally in the medicare crisis.

There had been calls for medicare in Saskatchewan as early as 1919. Advocates believed that stays in hospital and visits to doctors must be available to everyone as a tax-financed public good. But in 1944 the victorious CCF inherited a big deficit from the previous government, so the promise had to wait. By 1947, the province's finances were sound enough to create a publicly financed plan to pay for stays in hospital, with Saskatchewan footing the entire bill. In 1957, the Diefenbaker government launched a similar national program, and agreed to pay one-half of its cost. That meant Saskatchewan could then afford to pay for visits to doctors out of public revenues. In 1960, the CCF campaigned on medicare in a bitterly contested single-issue provincial election. Douglas won handily over the Liberals and their new leader Ross Thatcher, a robust politician and former CCF member of Parliament who had built an anti-socialist coalition in Saskatchewan.[2]

In April 1961, Douglas appointed a medical care advisory committee to study details of the proposal. The committee included members of the public, the medical establishment, the provincial Chamber of Commerce, and the trade union movement. Doctors on the committee were flatly opposed to medicare, and they were supported by the chamber. Walter Smishek, executive secretary of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, was the union representative on the committee and a strong proponent of the public health care plan. The Security Service wanted to know if Smishek was a communist or had communist connections. It instructed Hadesbeck to inquire among his party colleagues.

It takes some imagination to understand how this process worked. Think of beefy Security Service officers meeting with Hadesbeck in a smoke-filled hotel room in Regina, as happened every week or two. Hadesbeck kept notes on what he was asked about Smishek "because of his stand against the Chamber of Commerce and the Free Citizens Association." The association was a Saskatchewan group opposed to medicare and Smishek had described it as "ultra-conservative and extremely reactionary." Hadesbeck also wrote of Smishek: "Something that he said at an annual summer school of the Sask

Federation of Labour in 1962 on the doctor issue. What do the local Communists say of him?"[3]

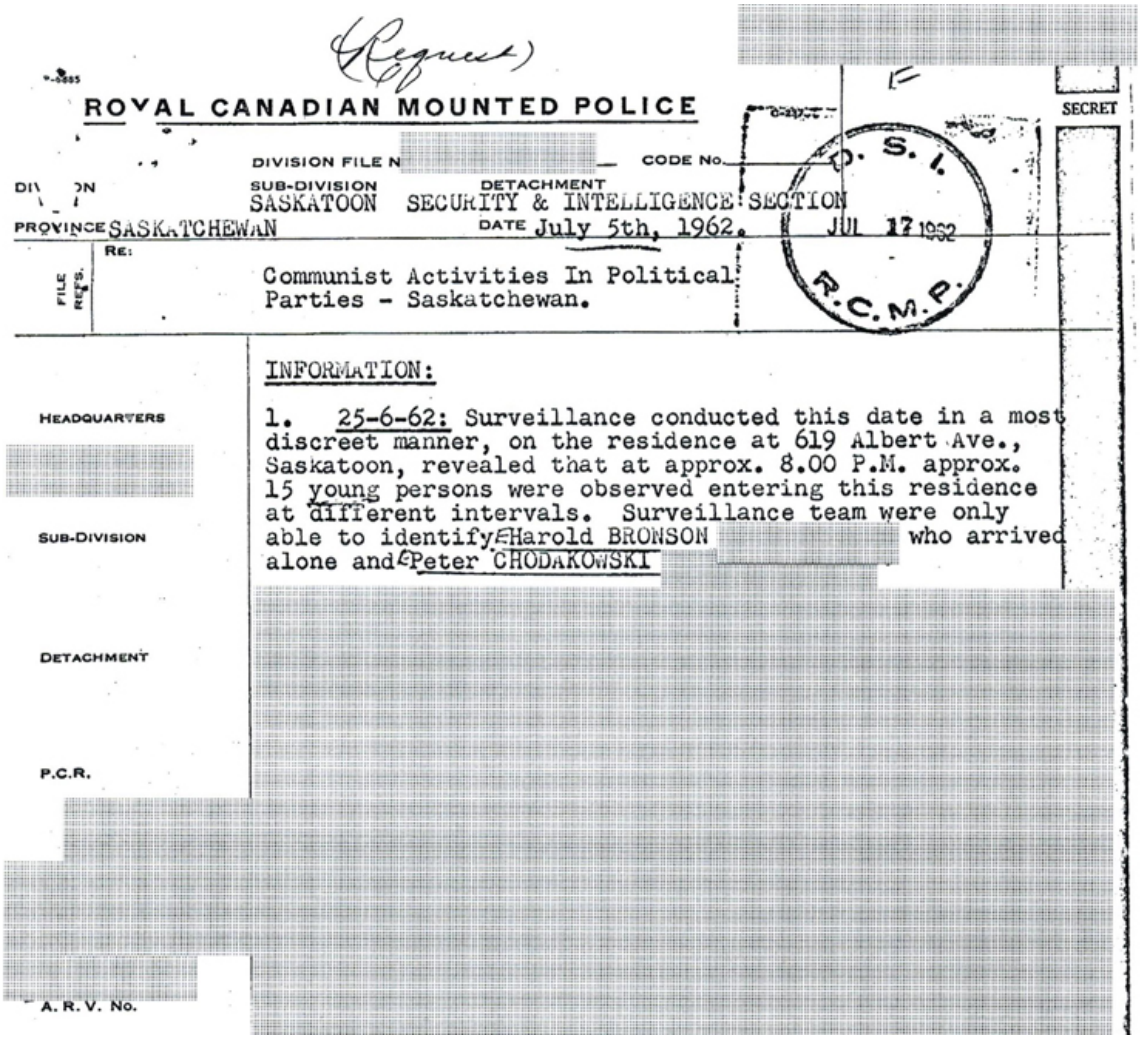
In making inquiries among his comrades, Hadesbeck would be careful not to appear too inquisitive, lest he arouse suspicion. He had to pick his spots over weeks, even months. He later responded to his handlers about what he had learned about Smishek: "A good contributor and fellow traveller. Also that he is left of centre politically and perhaps could be recruited to the Communist Party if he isn't already a member-at-large."

This response needs some unravelling: Smishek was described as a good contributor, a fellow traveller, and possibly a member-at-large. Those descriptions run the gamut. According to this description, Smishek could be anything from a progressive social democrat to a secret member of the Communist Party. What Hadesbeck reported was speculative and logically weak, but the police were interested in surveillance, not political science. Smishek would have been suspect to them because of his labour background and ethnic heritage. He was born in Poland and came to Canada with his parents as a five-year-old. The RCMP was rigidly military, proudly WASP, and suspicious of non-British immigrants. Smishek's name was to appear on Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists on several occasions.

The provincial medical profession was vigorously opposed to medicare, and the Canadian Medical Association got involved as well. The Liberals were the political opposition to the medicare plan. On the other side, supporting the government's plans, were CCF supporters, unions, farm organizations, academics, and some individual doctors as well. It became a hot dispute.

As implementation day approached on July 1, 1962, the medical profession threatened to withdraw its services. That announcement caused fear and anxiety. People supporting medicare decided they would set up their own consumer-led health clinics and hire sympathetic doctors to work in them. During a flurry of organizing meetings in late June and early July, the RCMP had informants in the room. The Saskatoon subdivision prepared a ten-page report, much of it now blacked out by censors. On June 27, the report described "surveillance of a very discreet nature" at an organizing meeting at the Union Centre in Saskatoon.[4] The document listed the names of many who attended, including Ed and Margaret Mahood. He was a

university professor, and she was one of two medical doctors who volunteered to staff the Saskatoon clinic in its first days.



(Request)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

SECRET

DIVISION FILE N [redacted] CODE No.

DIVISION SUB-DIVISION SASKATOON DETACHMENT SECURITY & INTELLIGENCE SECTION

PROVINCE SASKATCHEWAN DATE July 5th, 1962.

D. S. I. JUL 17 1962 R.C.M.P.

FILE REFS. RE: Communist Activities In Political Parties - Saskatchewan.

HEADQUARTERS [redacted]

SUB-DIVISION

DETACHMENT

P.C.R.

A. R. V. No.

INFORMATION:

1. 25-6-62: Surveillance conducted this date in a most discreet manner, on the residence at 619 Albert Ave., Saskatoon, revealed that at approx. 8.00 P.M. approx. 15 young persons were observed entering this residence at different intervals. Surveillance team were only able to identify Harold BRONSON [redacted] who arrived alone and Peter CHODAKOWSKI

Heavily redacted RCMP surveillance report linking medicare to communism, 1962. *Access to Information Act* (ATIA) file, Library and Archives Canada.

Corporal R. L. Firby of the Saskatoon subdivision provided investigator's comments summarizing the surveillance report. He added a final observation about the approximately 110 people attending the organizing meetings. He wrote: "they have not as yet made any concrete plans which would be of a disruptive and violent nature, although obviously some of the members in leadership positions appear to favour such action." That was an odd conclusion, because nothing in the body of the report made mention of anyone suggesting violence. Firby concluded: "A very close

watch is being kept on this group's activities." His report was forwarded to the RCMP commissioner in Ottawa.[5]

The information gleaned from meetings organizing the clinics would almost certainly have come from informants. Most of the people in the union hall would have known each other. If there was a police person in the room, even in civilian clothes, that person would have been conspicuous.

The Saskatchewan government, when confronted with a looming doctors' strike, began to recruit physicians from Great Britain. That country had introduced tax-financed health care after the Second World War, and most doctors were comfortable with it. Some of them went to Saskatchewan to care for patients during the strike. The RCMP kept close tabs on those doctors too.

The RCMP headquarters in Ottawa sent a note to their liaison officer in London telling him to collect information on Dr. Ida Fisher, who was on her way to Saskatchewan to practise during the strike. The note sent to the liaison officer commented on Fisher's Jewish origins and said she was "sent to Saskatchewan to lay the groundwork for socialized medicine in that province."[6] Dr. Fisher went to practise in a hospital in the town of Biggar, west of Saskatoon. She was fired within days when a striking doctor complained about how she handled a case.

The strike ended on July 23, 1962, but the Security Service kept community clinic proponents under surveillance for at least another six months, watching and reporting on organizing activities in Regina, Prince Albert, Swift Current, Estevan, Assiniboia, Kamsack, the Battlefords, and other centres. Early in the New Year, a two-man surveillance team staked out a members-only meeting of the Regina clinic held at the Museum of Natural History. They could not go inside but there is a brief report, blacked out in the material released by Library and Archives Canada.[7]

Another report described an individual whose name was blacked out as being "employed full-time by the co-op clinics operating in Regina and the province of Saskatchewan."[8] While the name was redacted, that person's address was provided. *Henderson's Directory* shows that he was William Harding, a long-time Saskatchewan civil servant and secretary to the Saskatchewan Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life between 1952 and 1957. Harding later worked in senior overseas posts for the United Nations.

In January 1963, an RCMP stakeout team watched as people entered the home of Stanley Rands in Regina for an evening meeting. Rands was deeply involved in the provincial clinic movement. One of the four officers on the surveillance team was Constable Wayne Boutilier, who was also functioning as one of Hadesbeck's RCMP handlers.[9]

In a debriefing session two years before the doctors' strike, Hadesbeck's handlers inquired about Rands and several others in Regina. Hadesbeck's note reads: "Are they party members? The party says no but they could be good party recruiting material. So say some local party members." In a later note, in 1965, he described Rands as "Fellow traveller and contributor."

Rands had earlier been forced out of his job at the National Film Board, an organization that became a prominent target of RCMP harassment and intimidation. He was told by his superior at the NFB, "We know that you are not a communist, but the point is some people think you are." He resigned and went west to work for the Saskatchewan government. The RCMP approached his superiors in the civil service to warn them about Rands. If the RCMP was trying to have him fired, it did not work. Later, Rands left voluntarily to teach at the Regina campus of the University of Saskatchewan.[10]

One of Rands's guests on the night of the RCMP stakeout was Ed Mahood. His daughter, Dr. Sally Mahood, is now a family physician in Regina. She was in her early teens during the medicare dispute in 1962 and she remembers it as a tense time. "There was a hysterical mood in the province and a lot of red-scare stuff going on," she told me. I asked whether her parents knew they were under surveillance. "I don't think so," she said. "They were involved in an all-consuming political struggle at the time. But they would not have been surprised. What distresses me is that the RCMP never has to account for why it harasses ordinary citizens engaged in political activity for good ends."[11]

The Communist Party observed the medicare dispute, although it mostly remained a spectator. The provincial committee met in late June 1962, just prior to the doctors' walkout. The agenda was wide-ranging, but a four-page informant's report said that medicare was discussed in detail. Norman Brudy, the party's provincial organizer, said they should support medicare "in a manner beneficial to the party."[12]

The name of the source reporting is blacked out. It was not Hadesbeck because his name is absent among the sixteen people listed as being at the meeting. The source had to be someone in the room because the event was not open to the public. The report originated not in Regina, but in the RCMP's Yorkton subdivision. The informant may well have been a member of the party's provincial committee from the Yorkton area.

It is remarkable that the RCMP saw the introduction of medicare as a seditious threat. The genesis and introduction of the plan were a testament to the democratic process. In the 1944 provincial election, Douglas and the CCF promised that, if elected, they would deliver it. The 1960 provincial election became a plebiscite on the issue, and the CCF won. In 1961, medicare legislation was tabled and debated in the legislature. When the plan was introduced in July 1962, the doctors went on strike. The RCMP was routinely used to break strikes, but here it chose to support one.

Medicare has become Canada's most cherished social program. What the RCMP saw as a threat in 1962 soon gained support from all political parties. Progressive Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker appointed Justice Emmett Hall to lead a royal commission into health care, which in 1964 recommended the Saskatchewan model for Canada. The government of a Liberal prime minister, Lester Pearson, passed federal enabling legislation in 1966 and made deals with the provinces and territories to implement a national plan by 1972.

A final irony is that community clinics, like the ones in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, were at first met with hostility by the medical profession, but those clinics modelled the value involved in a group medical practice that includes health and wellness professionals in addition to doctors.

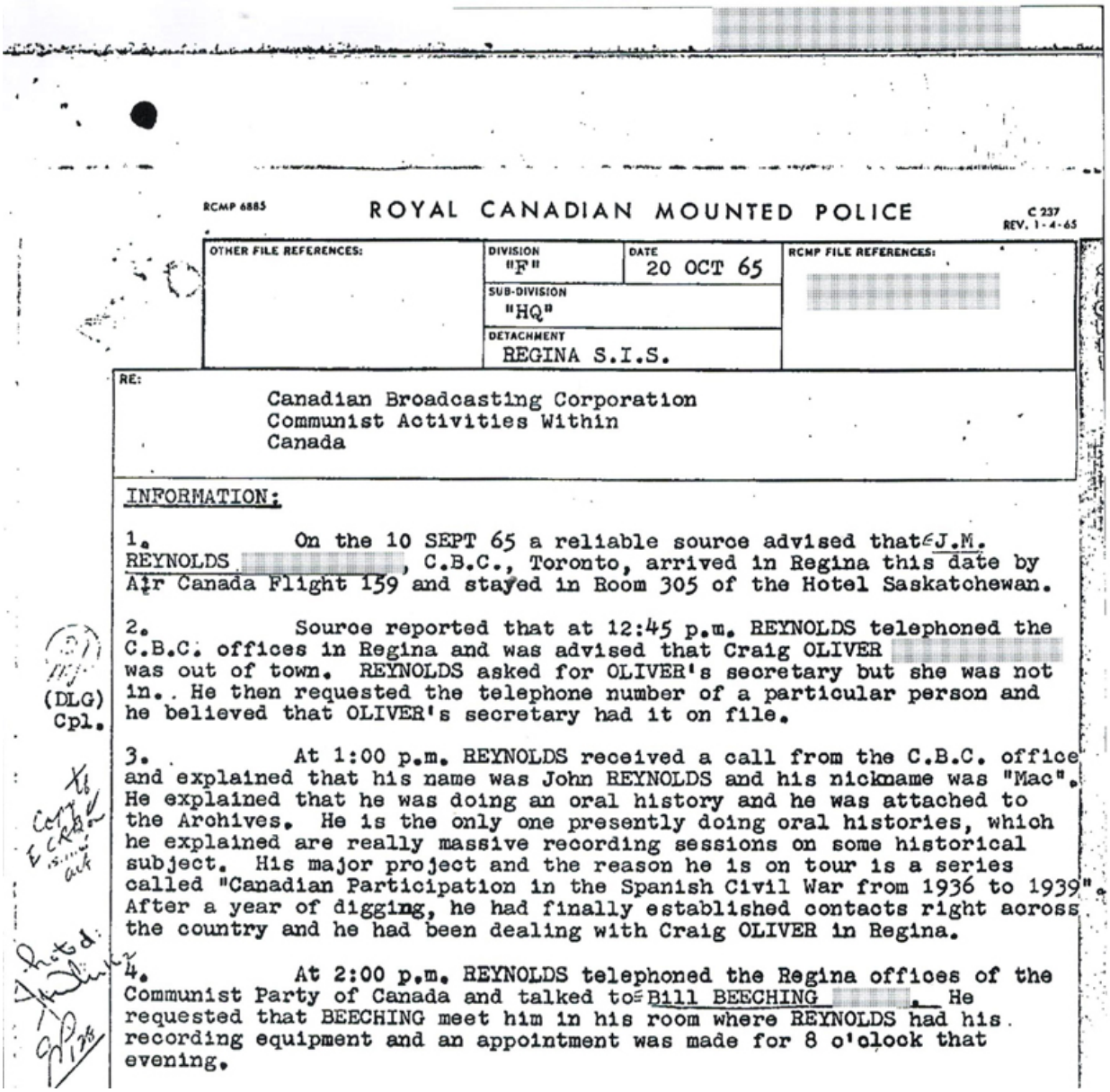
CHAPTER 14

BETRAYING A COMRADE

John (Mac) Reynolds flew into Regina on September 10, 1965. He worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and was interviewing aging veterans of the Spanish Civil War for an oral history project. Reynolds talked with two veterans in Regina. One was William Beeching. The other was Frank Hadesbeck.

Reynolds's visit to Regina was carefully monitored by the RCMP. The force knew when he was arriving, where he was staying, whom he called, and whom he would interview. The Security Service compiled an eleven-page report that was released only in 2011 under an access to information request by the Canadian Press. The report attributed its information to a "reliable source." A corporal from F Division in Regina prepared the document titled "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Communist Activities within Canada."[1]

According to the report, Reynolds arrived on Air Canada flight 159 and stayed in room 305 at the stately Hotel Saskatchewan in downtown Regina. Once in his room Reynolds made two telephone calls and received one. The report offers precise details about each. The first was to the CBC offices asking for reporter Craig Oliver. In later years, Oliver became a well-known reporter on Parliament Hill for the CBC and later the bureau chief for CTV. When Reynolds called the CBC, he learned that Oliver was not in the office on that day. Another of his calls was to William Beeching at the Communist Party office.



RCMP 6885 ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE C 237 REV. 1-4-65

OTHER FILE REFERENCES:

DIVISION "F" DATE 20 OCT 65

SUB-DIVISION "HQ"

DETACHMENT REGINA S.I.S.

RCMP FILE REFERENCES:

RE: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
Communist Activities Within
Canada

INFORMATION:

1. On the 10 SEPT 65 a reliable source advised that J.M. REYNOLDS [redacted], C.B.C., Toronto, arrived in Regina this date by Air Canada Flight 159 and stayed in Room 305 of the Hotel Saskatchewan.

2. Source reported that at 12:45 p.m. REYNOLDS telephoned the C.B.C. offices in Regina and was advised that Craig OLIVER [redacted] was out of town. REYNOLDS asked for OLIVER's secretary but she was not in. He then requested the telephone number of a particular person and he believed that OLIVER's secretary had it on file.

(DLG) Cpl.

3. At 1:00 p.m. REYNOLDS received a call from the C.B.C. office and explained that his name was John REYNOLDS and his nickname was "Mac". He explained that he was doing an oral history and he was attached to the Archives. He is the only one presently doing oral histories, which he explained are really massive recording sessions on some historical subject. His major project and the reason he is on tour is a series called "Canadian Participation in the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939". After a year of digging, he had finally established contacts right across the country and he had been dealing with Craig OLIVER in Regina.

4. At 2:00 p.m. REYNOLDS telephoned the Regina offices of the Communist Party of Canada and talked to Bill BEECHING [redacted]. He requested that BEECHING meet him in his room where REYNOLDS had his recording equipment and an appointment was made for 8 o'clock that evening.

RCMP surveillance report on CBC journalist John Reynolds, 1965. ATIA file, Library and Archives Canada.

Beeching was the most prominent communist in the province. He was born in small-town Saskatchewan and later moved to Regina. He joined the fledging CCF in the 1930s, but he also joined the Communist Party in 1936, which resulted in his being expelled from the CCF in 1937. In that year, he responded to the call for volunteers to fight in Spain, arriving there in October. Beeching was placed with the Americans in the Lincoln-Washington Battalion, but later he joined Canadian fighters as a member of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.[2]

The Communist Party in Spain had him complete a detailed questionnaire like the one it had provided to Frank Hadesbeck. In it, Beeching provided a detailed account of his party activities in Canada prior to leaving for Spain. His completed form was accompanied by a typewritten sheet from his brigade's party committee, which was sent to the Central Committee in Barcelona. The message said, in part: "The party in view of the good conduct of comrade Beeching brings him to the notice of the Central Committee in the hope that this information will be of service. His general political attitude and the part which he has played in political life has always been very good. The opinion among comrades is that he is trustworthy." Beeching was considered a model communist who could be counted on by the party once he returned to Canada.[3]

When the Spanish government decided in 1938 to have the international volunteers withdrawn, Beeching, like Hadesbeck, had to wait several months before he could leave. Once in England, he sailed to Canada in February 1939 aboard the *Duchess of Richmond*, arriving in Halifax on February 3. Beeching's ship was met in Halifax by a welcoming crowd, which included plainclothes police officers. His name was on an RCMP list of those who disembarked. Hadesbeck arrived a week later aboard the *Duchess of Bedford* and his name was on a similar list.

When Beeching returned to Regina, he immediately resumed work for the party. On February 24, 1939, he delivered a radio address describing the backdrop to the civil war and the army coup. He talked about his experience and some of the battles engaged in by the Canadian fighters. He pleaded with his audience to send money to help returning members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion who had been injured and were suffering.[4]

When Ottawa declared the Communist Party illegal in 1940, Beeching was interned for two years under the Defence of Canada Regulations. He was released in 1942, and volunteered for the Canadian armed forces, serving in the United Kingdom. When he returned to Regina in 1946, Beeching became the most recognized face of the party in Saskatchewan. He was an activist, a public intellectual, a party organizer, and the provincial leader.

The party's better days had passed by then, but Beeching continued to travel the province speaking at public meetings and attempting to recruit members. He was a familiar presence at labour and farm movement

conventions, distributing literature and engaging anyone he could in the hallways. Beeching contested numerous elections at every level, usually attracting just a smattering of votes. He was a prodigious writer who published a seemingly endless stream of tracts, pamphlets, newsletters, and letters to the editor. He presented briefs before royal commissions, travelling parliamentary committees, public hearings, and inquiries.

Beeching's spouse Elsie Gehl was equally committed to the cause. Born in a sod hut in rural Saskatchewan, she was one of thirteen children. She became a teacher but during the Second World War moved to Vancouver for a time to work as a riveter in a Boeing aircraft factory. Gehl was active in the party and the peace movement. She and Beeching were married in Regina in 1947 and became, as she termed it, partners in the struggle.[5]

As an adolescent, Len Fischer thought of Elsie Gehl and Wiliam Beeching as his aunt and uncle (Gehl was a sister of Fischer's grandmother). The Fischers, along with the Gehl family and Beechings, were all members of the small Communist Party in Regina and they socialized frequently. Although young Len Fischer was not interested in joining the party, he marvelled at Beeching's ability in debates and in the media. "He knew a lot and he was always calm. He would not respond to provocations." Fischer told me that in social and family settings, Beeching was quiet and deferred to his partner. "She would interject her views. He was not the life of the party. He had to be approached but he was always amiable and good with kids. You could talk to him, but he did use big words."[6]

Beeching and Frank Hadesbeck shared a history. They were both from Regina. Both fought in Spain, although they served in different units and did not meet there. But they came to know each other well enough for Beeching to send Hadesbeck a brief letter from his internment camp in Petawawa in April 1941. "Am in fine shape," Beeching wrote, "but anxious to get it over with and gain my freedom." The letter arrived in an envelope bearing the words Prisoner of War Mail.[7] Hadesbeck was just then establishing himself as an RCMP informant in Calgary, prior to moving to Regina in 1946.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the two men rubbed elbows almost daily in the party's Regina office. Ironically, the office was in the stately Northern Crown Bank Building, albeit in a basement suite containing gurgling pipes that supported the heating system. This five-storey structure

built in 1906 became the anchor in Regina's central business district. Constructed in a classical revival style, it has now been designated as a heritage site.

Together, Hadesbeck and Beeching participated in an endless string of party meetings, conventions, rallies, and social events. Hadesbeck played a less public role than Beeching. In Regina, as in Calgary, he volunteered for tasks in the office and behind the scenes. He would have printed at least some of Beeching's literary output on the party's duplicating machine.

According to the Security Service report on Reynolds's visit to Regina, he invited Beeching to his hotel room for a taped interview at eight o'clock on the evening of his arrival on September 10. The report provides an insight into how the police went about their surveillance. Reynolds, a CBC employee, would have been identified earlier as a person of interest. Someone informed the police that Reynolds would be visiting Regina and why.

Beeching arrived at the hotel as planned for the interview. The Security Service report says the conversation began with Reynolds telling Beeching about other veterans whom he had interviewed. Beeching knew most of them. The two also traded other information about mutual acquaintances. Five of the report's ten pages are missing in the file released by Library and Archives Canada in the early 2000s. Most of what remains deals with the pre-interview conversation. Then, on its fifth page, the report reads: "At this point Reynolds turned on his tape recorder and recorded Beeching's comments." Reynolds asked Beeching where he was on July 18, 1936, the day on which General Franco launched his coup. Beeching began to talk about his recruitment, his voyage to Spain, and his service there.[8]

William Beeching was the long-time leader of the Communist Party in Saskatchewan. Photo circa 1968. Saskatoon Public Library QC-4438.

Reynolds interviewed Hadesbeck on the following day. The Regina interviews, along with dozens of others with Spanish Civil War veterans across the country, remained buried in the CBC Radio archives for decades. It was at first difficult, and later impossible, to gain access to them on site at CBC in Toronto for research purposes. I have now purchased the recordings for Beeching and Hadesbeck.[9]

In his interview, Beeching responded to Reynolds's first question by saying that on July 18, 1936, he was in Regina. "I was a communist," he said. "I was very active at that time in civic politics. I was also secretary of the first labour council in the city." Asked about his motives, and those of other young men who volunteered to go to Spain, Beeching described a high calling. "I would say a majority of young people in our country who did any thinking at all were aware generally of the problem. They knew there was a

major struggle in the world between fascism on the one hand and democracy in some form on the other and were beginning to take sides."[10]

There was no one in the room other than Beeching and Reynolds. The window must have been open because in the significant pauses between question and answer there was muted traffic noise and the occasional distant honking of horns. It is almost certain, given the rich amount of detail provided in its report, that the Security Service had planted a covert listening device, often referred to as a bug, in room 305. The RCMP had routinely used methods of surveillance that "existed in a gray area of legality," according to authors Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby.[11] That included planting bugs, wiretapping phones, and intercepting mail. These activities were often illegal but were generally accepted as part of the job. The politicians nominally in charge of police oversight were often content not to know too much.

Reynolds interviewed Hadesbeck in the same hotel room on the following day. Hadesbeck's papers contain a card with the words "Room 305" written on it, as well as "1:30 p.m., Sept. 11/65." On an accompanying note, Hadesbeck jotted down, in brief outline form, what he was to talk to Reynolds about: how and why he went to Spain; what he had done while there; how he'd left that country and returned to Canada.[12] The Security Service report about Reynolds's trip to Regina makes no mention of the interview conducted with Hadesbeck. The RCMP had no need to report on its own source.

In the following days, Reynolds wrote to both Hadesbeck and Beeching thanking them for having granted interviews. To Hadesbeck, he wrote: "I would like to thank you for your cooperation while I was in Regina. I listened to the tapes and can tell you that there is a great deal of new material in them." Hadesbeck had obviously mentioned his Spanish Civil War diary to Reynolds as well. Reynolds wrote: "I can very well understand your feelings about your diaries and would not press you to part with them."[13] In a letter to Beeching, Reynolds was less than complimentary about Hadesbeck. "He finally turned up and we talked for two hours," he wrote.[14]

There are notable differences in Reynolds's interviews with the two men. He treated Beeching as an equal, almost a mentor, and talked philosophy with him, as well as details about the war in Spain. Theirs was more of a free-flowing conversation than an interview. For example, he asked, "Just

how democratic do you think the elected government in Spain was? Was it really a left-wing government? Was it a liberal government?" Later he asked: "We have contemporary wars, but they don't do the same things to our youth, and I am wondering about the difference between 1936 and 1965."

In the Hadesbeck interview, Reynolds appeared exasperated when Hadesbeck answered the first question by saying he went to Spain hoping to improve his lot in life. Reynolds then asked, "You did not have any great political feelings about it?" Hadesbeck replied, "None whatsoever." Reynolds then asked, "It wasn't from a very strong anti-fascist feeling?" Hadesbeck replied: "I didn't know what the word meant at that particular time."[15]

Hadesbeck and Beeching also differed markedly in the language they used when responding to questions. Beeching spoke about being approached by "chaps" from the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy; about feeling "inexorably pushed in a certain direction" to go to Spain; about "lads" in the field during the war; and about "the development of competence" among the Republican forces.

Hadesbeck was not inarticulate, but he was a plain speaker with a basic vocabulary. Where Beeching talked about "chaps," Hadesbeck talked about "fellas." He frequently used well-worn sayings. Describing why he went to Spain, Hadesbeck said, "You forget I was a single unemployed man and pretty well fed up with things, being kicked from pillar to post." Occasionally, he confused tenses: "I done a hitch in the anti-aircraft battery at Fort Winfield Scott, California." Asked by Reynolds about discussions that might have been led by the commissars among the troops, Hadesbeck responded, "Mussolini. Certain things that he done, we discussed that right away. What Hitler done. We discussed that." Asked if the Italian and German planes attacking his unit were manoeuvrable, he said, "Not in them days."

Beeching had finished high school and took some accounting courses. Hadesbeck was an orphan with three years in school. Prior to going to Spain, Beeching had been involved in the Communist Party and the labour movement, where he'd honed his skills at speaking and writing. Hadesbeck was working with sheep and cattle on ranches and picking sugar beets. Beeching was more polished and articulate, more politically sophisticated.

But Hadesbeck could drive a truck and repair one. He could load and shoot an anti-aircraft gun. He had been a capable soldier, now turned informant.

The Security Service report was sent by a Regina officer to RCMP divisional headquarters in Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver. The commissioner in Ottawa also received a copy. The author commented it was unfortunate that, while in Regina, Reynolds missed going to a social event for party member Nelson Clarke. It occurred at the home of another Regina member, Norman Brudy. “Had this taken place as planned,” the officer wrote, “it is possible more information in respect to Reynolds and his political sympathies or affiliations would have been obtained.” That information, had Reynolds attended the social, would have been provided by Hadesbeck.

The RCMP believed that Reynolds had communist sympathies. The report notes that while he did not admit to any party affiliation, he did maintain relations with prominent party leaders Tim Buck and Stanley Ryerson. The RCMP had long harboured suspicions about the CBC, as it did about the National Film Board. The police believed them to be highbrow and left wing. Those sentiments were one thing, but the heavy-handed surveillance conducted on a working journalist’s trip to Regina had about it the air of authoritarian overreach.

Reynolds’s visit to Regina created a flurry of activity among Hadesbeck’s handlers. They made surveillance plans prior to the visit and they later debriefed him. In notes that he had been warned never to keep, Hadesbeck made these entries:[16]

- “Aug. 30, 1965 in Hotel Sask with John Dowie and Boots Boutilier, to talk about Mr. Craig Oliver (CBC reporter).” Hadesbeck’s note did not indicate what the police wanted to know about Oliver, but likely it had to do with Reynolds’s upcoming trip. Reynolds likely reached out to Oliver for help in locating subjects to interview. It is a common practice for local CBC journalists to lend a hand in this way to visiting colleagues.
- “Sept. 9, 1965, again with B. Boutilier, Room 254 Plains Hotel, to plan action on the CBC Spain story.” There was no further detail in

Hadesbeck's notes, but the meeting had to do with planning surveillance for Reynolds's visit.

- "Sept. 21, 1965, Don Gehring, #253 Plains Hotel to report on CBC tape recording." This meeting occurred ten days after the visit.

Throughout the remainder of the 1960s and well into the 1970s, Hadesbeck's handlers inquired about veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. By then most of the men were in their sixties, and by the RCMP's own admission most were not politically active. But the RCMP nonetheless continued with its surveillance.

The Security Service officers named in Hadesbeck's notes were all active in Regina at that time. *Henderson's Directory* for Regina in 1965 identified Wayne D. Boutilier as working for the RCMP. This identification is bolstered by information gleaned from the RCMP Graves website and Ancestry.com. Born in Nova Scotia, Boutilier joined the force in 1952 at the age of eighteen. He served in Saskatchewan and at headquarters in Ottawa before retiring in 1977 and joining the Bank of Canada from 1978 to 1992. As indicated in the previous chapter, Boutilier was among the officers who provided surveillance in 1963 on a Regina meeting of individuals involved in the community clinic movement.

Officer John C. Dowie was listed in *Henderson's Directory* as an employee of the federal government. His profile on the RCMP Graves website describes him as John Charles Dowie, alias Odowichuk. He was born in 1927 near Bonnyville, Alberta, to parents who had immigrated in 1914 from Galicia. The *Saskatchewan Gazette* indicated that in August 1948 John Odowichuk, then living at Hafford, Saskatchewan, changed his name to Dowie. Fourteen months later he joined the RCMP.[17] He was posted in Saskatchewan on three occasions and was a staff sergeant when he retired in 1967. Dowie's ability to speak Ukrainian would have been useful to a police force that was overwhelmingly anglophone but kept a close and suspicious eye upon Ukrainian Canadians.

William Beeching was prominent in the Communist Party not only in Saskatchewan, but at the national level as well. Beeching was elected to the party's central executive committee in 1969 and moved to Toronto. He became editor of the *Canadian Tribune* and there was speculation that he

might become the next national leader. But his tenure in Toronto was to be brief. During the 1970 October Crisis and the Trudeau government's implementation of the *War Measures Act*, there was disagreement among members of the central committee about actions taken by its executive committee regarding the crisis.[18] The central committee met for three days in Toronto on November 14 to 16, 1970, and for two of those days there was an intense debate about Quebec.

Beeching's papers at Library and Archives Canada provide a description of what was being argued. One presenter was Don Currie, a committee member and the son of Beeching's wife Elsie from a previous relationship. Currie said that the party leadership was missing in action in Quebec following the implementation of the *War Measures Act*. No one had gone to Montreal to show solidarity with the leaders there.[19] Currie also criticized the national leadership for its general lack of support for Quebec's self-determination, an effort that should be led by communists and not by the "bourgeois" Parti Québécois. He also said that any party statement about the *War Measures Act* should criticize the actions of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) as "reactionary and harmful to the interests of the working class."[20]

A note in Beeching's Library and Archives Canada file indicates that five of the central committee members, including Beeching and Currie, were accused of "factionalism" and "left opportunism." The five resigned from the committee but agreed not to publicize their disagreement.[21] Beeching emerged relatively unscathed from the fracas, although it was not to be his last with the party. The executive central committee recommended that he resume his role as party leader in Saskatchewan and that he be paid as a full-time party organizer. He was soon back in Regina, where members re-elected him as their provincial leader.[22]

Beeching's return to Regina had an immediate impact on Hadesbeck. By 1970, he had every reason to be winding down. He would soon be sixty-five years old and was planning to leave his day job with the General Tractor company. Hadesbeck had been an RCMP informant over a thirty-year period, save for a few years out after he moved back to Regina in 1946.

But in January 1971, the RCMP came knocking on his door. Hadesbeck wrote in his notes: "Ivor Jenkins came to my house to see if I would go back

to work for them. He said that Bill Beeching was back in Regina. He said he knew why, but he wanted to hear Bill's story." The RCMP was so keen to maintain surveillance on Beeching that they lured Hadesbeck out of his planned retirement as an agent.

Jenkins remained one of Hadesbeck's handlers for the next several years. *Henderson's Directory* had him and his wife Doris listed at an address in Regina. Jenkins replaced an officer named Donald Gehring as Hadesbeck's main RCMP contact. Gehring worked with Hadesbeck from 1965 through 1970. He was among the officers who debriefed Hadesbeck on John Reynolds's visit to Regina. Gehring's name appeared in *Henderson's Directory* for several years during the 1960s; he was listed as being with the RCMP. According to the RCMP Graves website, Gehring joined the force in 1948 and spent his entire career in Saskatchewan before retiring at the rank of staff sergeant in 1970. When Jenkins visited Hadesbeck in his rooms in January 1971, he said that Gehring had left for Vancouver to take a job with BC Hydro.[23]

William Beeching contacted Hadesbeck not long after returning to Regina. On February 2, 1971, Hadesbeck wrote: "Got a phone call from Bill Beeching. Said he quit his job as editor of the *Tribune* and resigned from the Communist Party over policy and differences of opinion over party lines." On the bottom of that same page, Hadesbeck wrote: "Phoned Ivor Jenkins about above phone call."

If Beeching was ever suspicious of Hadesbeck, he did not show it. In 1973, Beeching sent a warm message thanking Hadesbeck for being a pallbearer at the funeral of Beeching's aunt. In 1976, he wrote from Yalta while he was visiting the Soviet Union. Beeching said: "Hope you are keeping very well. We are being well looked after, in fact too well … Socialism is great. It's for people like us. Our lives were hard and insecure. The trend here is to make everything better and the lives of people easier."[24]

The two had a shared history, but there was a difference. Beeching was a lifelong communist. Hadesbeck was a communist for the RCMP.

CHAPTER 15

CASTING A WIDE NET

Frank Hadesbeck's notes during the 1970s contained dozens of brief entries describing meetings with a succession of RCMP handlers, usually in Regina hotel rooms. The Communist Party and its affiliated organizations remained his focus, even though the party had faded into near irrelevance by then. The surveillance, however, went well beyond that. Hadesbeck had lists containing labour leaders; university professors and students; Indigenous leaders (whom he described as "natives"); some members of the clergy and certain religious organizations; and progressive farm organizations, primarily the Farmers Union. The RCMP also continued to be suspicious of the peace movement and of groups devoted to protecting human rights.

Many of these names were familiar to me. I was born and raised in Saskatchewan, studied at the university in Saskatoon, and worked as a newspaper reporter there in the early 1970s. I moved east in 1973 and worked as a feature writer for the *Windsor Star*, but returned to Saskatchewan in 1975. For most of the next fifteen years, I worked in Regina for the CBC in both radio and television. As a reporter and later a radio host, I knew many people on Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists. Only a very few would have belonged to the Communist Party, but the Security Service collected information about them anyway. I have organized a sampling of these individuals and groups to simplify the diffuse handwritten notes that Hadesbeck created and preserved.

Communist Party: Hadesbeck's role as office custodian provided him with a flow of information about the party. He was in frequent contact with the most active local members, like William Beeching; Ed Lehman, a young party member; and Fred Schofield, a Swift Current area farmer. Schofield was the party leader briefly in 1969–70 during Beeching's ill-fated move to party central in Toronto.

Hadesbeck's files contain excerpts from a notebook between January and May 1974, detailing what party business he conducted on a day-to-day basis. It is a mundane list but instructive as well:[1]

- "Jan. 2: To post office and party office: 2–4 p.m."
- "Jan. 20: To C. Party office pre-convention: 1–6 p.m. (3 p.m. lunch)"
- "Jan. 23: To Post Office to clear box and on to party office (2–4 p.m.)"
- "Jan. 30: To regular party meeting (8–11 p.m.)"
- "March 4: To party office to tend the bookstore while Beeching and Ed Lehman drive to Saskatoon (1–5 p.m.)"
- "March 8: Ed Lehman came to my house (9:30–11:30 p.m.)"
- "March 20: To regular C. party meeting (8–11 p.m.)"
- "March 23: To party office for provincial convention (1:30–5:30 p.m.)"
- "March 30: To Labour Centre for seminar (2–4 p.m.)"
- "April 1: To Post Office to clear mail and two parcels of pamphlets and on to party office (2–4 p.m.)"
- "April 6: To Beeching home for social, beer and lunch (8–11 p.m.)"
- "April 17: To Beeching home to discuss USSR-Canada Friendship Association and on to mail box and office (1–4 p.m.)"
- "May 1: To bus depot to pick up Wally King, to Exhibition Auditorium for May Day rally (2–4 p.m.)"
- "May 1: Beeching and Ed Lehman come to the house (9–11:30 p.m.)"

When I informed Ed Lehman that his former comrade had been an RCMP informant, he was astonished. "I am quite blown away by the information you have provided," Lehman told me. "At first, I felt like writing and saying, 'It can't be true.'"[2]

Hadesbeck's files at the Saskatchewan archives contain some of his Communist Party membership booklets. He was also a member of the Regina Committee of Progressive Electors, a front group that fielded

candidates in civic elections. His committee membership card for 1976 was signed by William Beeching's spouse, Elsie.

Hadesbeck was for a time the Regina branch secretary of the USSR-Canada Friendship Association. His files contain his membership card and receipts for his paid-up dues. The association attempted to counteract generally negative views that Canadians held of the Soviet Union. Ed Lehman went to Hadesbeck's home to help him with correspondence. "He always treated me nicely and I liked him," Lehman told me. "He always made coffee for me and sometimes he would make lunch. What we were doing was perfectly legal. It could have been done by the Canadian government, the Liberal Party, or the NDP. We were trying to help create an atmosphere of good relations and détente between the USSR and the West."

Hadesbeck's files contain a handwritten list of the association's members in Saskatchewan for 1973, as well as its mailing list for 1974. The organization's 1976 financial statement is in the file along with a business card describing Hadesbeck as its Regina branch secretary. There is a September 1977 letter from Viktor Mikheev, the press attaché of the USSR embassy in Ottawa. Mikheev said he would be visiting Regina and would like to meet Hadesbeck for a chat.

Labour unions: Hadesbeck was involved in the surveillance of unions while he lived in Alberta. There was less union density in Saskatchewan, but the RCMP was still interested in the labour movement. In one of his notes referring to the 1960s, Hadesbeck wrote: "Special agents collected any and all names of unions and their membership who might be left wingers or troublemakers during protests and strikes. The RCMP wanted all names of unionists who were mentioned in the Communist Party offices and literature."

Hadesbeck inquired among his comrades about numerous labour leaders and activists. They included Nadine Hunt, who was vice-president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. She became its president in 1978. In one entry, Hadesbeck wrote: "Trade unionist: Was to Moscow, Soviet Union 1973. A member of the Regina Labour Council, also on the Continuing Committee for Peace. A good left of centre trade unionist and a NDP supporter. So say the local Communist Party members."

The Watch Out lists for unions were not limited to Saskatchewan. Hadesbeck was instructed to inquire about national leaders, including Grace Hartman, who was president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. He inquired about Canadian Labour Congress president Dennis McDermott, and Shirley Carr, who succeeded McDermott at the CLC. In a 1973 note, Hadesbeck's description of McDermott read: "Trade unionist, said to be a communist at large, says some Com Party members. At least a fellow traveller."

As CLC president, McDermott mounted a vigorous campaign against Pierre Trudeau's wage and price controls legislation in 1976. During a national day of protest, an estimated one million workers joined in demonstrations across the country. Hadesbeck's notes read: "When the federal government put in wage controls, the order came to gather all names of trade unionists and unions that are mentioned at Communist Party meetings, along with those of left-wing political leaning." Originally from Ireland, McDermott was appointed as Canada's ambassador to that country in 1986 by Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Farm organizations: The RCMP kept watch on progressive farm leaders. Among them were Alf Gleave and Roy Atkinson, who had both had served as presidents of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union. After his term, Gleave became an NDP member of Parliament. Atkinson was instrumental in creating the National Farmers Union (NFU) in 1969. He became the organization's long-serving president and enjoyed a high profile with his trenchant criticism of corporate agriculture. Atkinson and Gleave appeared on Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists on various occasions. Gleave was described as a contributor. Atkinson was "a fellow traveller and perhaps a Communist Party member-at-large. So say some party members." Other NFU activists on the Watch Out lists included Frank Dietz, who had a grain farm in central Saskatchewan, and Jack McCloy, who along with Atkinson was a founding member of the NFU.

Roy Atkinson was a founder of the National Farmers Union. Photo circa 1965. Courtesy National Farmers Union.

The Security Service files at Library and Archives Canada contain information on the NFU, which was released under earlier access to information requests. In July 1969, the RCMP had a source at the NFU's founding convention in Winnipeg. That person's name is blacked out in the document, as is any reference to Atkinson, although he is obviously the leader being referred to. The RCMP document reads: "Source is somewhat concerned with the character [redacted], as this individual's speeches had very radical overtones. His comments were to the point of threatening Canadian government with strikes or other forceful measures if their demands were not heeded."[3]

The report on the NFU convention was supplied by the RCMP detachment in Edmonton, although the convention had occurred in Winnipeg. Likely the source was someone from the Alberta farming community, either an NFU member or perhaps someone from the Farmers Union of Alberta. Some of its members attended the founding convention, but the group decided not to join the NFU and soon became a bitter critic that engaged in counter-organizing. Don Kossick was a young field worker for the NFU in 1970–71. He now recalls: “The police were not only recording what we were doing. They encouraged a right wing that ended up controlling the National Farmers Union in Alberta.”[4]

THE CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE - GENDARMERIE ROYALE DU CANADA

OTHER FILE REFERENCES / REF AUTRES DOSSIERS	DIVISION "K"	DATE 19-8-69	RCMP FILE REFERENCES / REF DOSSIERS GRC
	SUB DIVISION / SOUS DIVISION H.Q.		[redacted]
	DETACHMENT / DETACHEMENT EDMONTON S.I.B.		

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National Farmer's Union - Canada

INFORMATION:

1. On 11-8-69, a source [redacted] attended the National Farmer's Union(N.F.U.) Founding Convention in Winnipeg on July 30th and 31st, 1969, in Winnipeg. This convention was attended by delegates from all provinces except Quebec. [redacted] delegated members to attend the convention and they numbered about 75 farmers [redacted] Apart from the above, a few persons from other F.U.A. Districts attended as observers.

2. Source stated that in his opening speech, [redacted] made reference to the 75 odd F.U.A. members that attended as delegates without any official F.U.A. participation. They were given a standing ovation by the convention. [redacted] spoke on behalf of the F.U.A. and he tried to explain the F.U.A. position and the fact that a convention was being held in December to vote on the N.F.U. issue. His speech was poorly received by the convention. Source believes that the convention had expected BABEY to make a personal commitment on behalf of the F.U.A. His speech clearly indicated that the F.U.A. would give serious thought before any N.F.U. commitment was made.

3. Source [redacted] stated that the leaders of the convention roused the enthusiasm of the members to the point that no matter what anyone said, they would get an ovation. It is also source's belief that the convention planners [redacted] and others) had their key supporters spread evenly throughout the convention floor and whenever a point was presented they would immediately rise and endorse it and draw the other delegates into it.

4. It is source's belief that [redacted] controlled the whole convention and when [redacted] and it is virtually impossible for a union like the F.U.A. or the Canadian Federation of Agriculture(C.P.A.) [redacted] to try to influence the aims or methods of the N.F.U. If the F.U.A. votes in favor of joining the N.F.U. in their December convention they will have no voice other than membership voice in the N.F.U. [redacted]

.../2 ... 2

[redacted]

A much-redacted Security Service report on the NFU founding convention in 1969. ATIA file, Library and Archives Canada.

Kossick adds that there was a concern for his safety. “It was heavy duty. When I went to speak at meetings in Alberta, the NFU sent one of its strongest people to go with me. They wanted him there in case something would happen.” While working as an organizer in Alberta and Saskatchewan, he also recalls being stopped frequently by police on the highway and asked to open the trunk of his car.

Roy Atkinson complained to the RCMP commissioner about the surveillance, but he received no response.[5] In 1974, the federal government admitted that it had used a Saskatoon travel agency to monitor his movements.[6] Atkinson’s daughter Pat, who later served as an NDP cabinet minister in Saskatchewan, says her father assumed that he was often under surveillance, but he carried on as usual.[7] Roy Atkinson led the NFU for ten years. After he retired, he was inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame and was invested as a Member in the Order of Canada.

To my surprise, I also found the name of Father Philip Loehr on Hadesbeck’s Watch Out lists. Loehr was a Benedictine monk at St. Peter’s Abbey near Humboldt, Saskatchewan. The monks had a boarding school for boys, which I attended in the 1960s. A diminutive man, Loehr was ever smiling and always gracious, but he had an analysis of the farm situation that was close to that of the NFU. He was the convenor of agriculture and rural life for his Catholic diocese, acting as a resource for meetings and discussion groups within the church. Loehr was also in demand for NFU events and collaborated in research with the sociology department at the University of Regina. In 1972, he was part of a farm delegation to China organized by Atkinson.[8]

Academics and students: Hadesbeck included on his Watch Out lists dozens of university professors and some students, most of them at the University of Saskatchewan’s Regina campus. The campus became a separate university in 1974. Hadesbeck wrote in his notes: “Special agents do work on university campuses for subversive activities. Paying students for information on the left of centre political teachings of some professors and speakers on today’s educational questions.”

This detailed work by the Security Service at the local level was part of a much broader national plan. In the early 1970s, the service designed what it called a Key Sectors initiative. The intent was to modernize its methods of surveillance in sectors it deemed most prone to being infiltrated by so-called subversives. They included primarily the New Left and "sectors" such as government, the media, education, and the armed forces.[9] A three-page note titled "Key Sectors—Canada" dated January 3, 1973, and prepared in the RCMP's Saskatchewan Division, was scathing in its description of Regina campus professors. "We have been blessed with a few American types from previously turmoiled universities such as Simon Fraser," the report read. "We propose in the very near future a very active workload in this Education Sector due to this turmoil."[10]

An earlier internal RCMP report in 1969 had described a group of faculty members as "anywhere from extreme left wing to Marxists, Maoists and revolutionary in their political leanings." The same report said these faculty members were "in constant contact with the radical student element and appear to counsel them on contentious issues."[11]

Students, faculty, and even the university administration had long been aware that surveillance was occurring. An article in the *Young Socialist Forum* from December 1963 reported on a resolution passed by the Student Representative Council denouncing the RCMP's attempts to recruit students as informants.[12]

Rob Milen was a student on the Regina campus in the late 1960s and served on the student council. His name appeared on Hadesbeck's list. In an interview, Milen told me, "The campus was a hotbed of debate. We just assumed that the RCMP had eyes and ears about what was going on." He recalled that a fellow student was spotted in the community wearing an RCMP uniform.[13]

Hadesbeck's list of suspect professors included Peter Smollett, who taught film at the Regina campus and was open about his Communist Party membership. Smollett grew up in Brooklyn and worked as a film editor in the 1950s. He also spent years on a party assignment as an industrial worker and union organizer. He and his spouse Eleanor, a cultural anthropologist, immigrated to Regina in the 1970s and both taught at the university.

Hadesbeck told Otto Driedger: "Smollett never did like me, but he used to come to Communist Party meetings every week just like everybody else

and took his share of reading material out and did some work here and there, and he was a damned good financial contributor." I knew the Smolletts, although not well. They were cordial hosts whose two-storey home on a comfortable Regina crescent was crammed with books and periodicals.

Among the other professors and instructors on Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists were historians Lorne Brown and Richard Allen; economist Jack Boan; political scientists Joe Roberts and Barry Barlow; and John Conway, a sociologist. Otto Driedger, whom Hadesbeck approached to write his life story, was surprised when I told him that he was on the list as well. He had not noticed his own name when reading through material from Hadesbeck's files.

Norm Bolen, editor of the student newspaper, was among the others listed. He later became a leading broadcast executive for CBC Radio and Television. Warren Caragata, another student journalist, was on the list. He went on to write for the Canadian Press and *Maclean's*. John Gallagher, also on Hadesbeck's list, became editor of the National Farmers Union newspaper.

Another student mentioned, a man considerably older than the others, was Alvin Hergott. He, like Father Loehr, had been a monk at St. Peter's Abbey, and one of my high school teachers. Hergott later left the priesthood and was studying in Regina when the RCMP asked Hadesbeck to inquire about him. The note in December 1968 was cryptic: "Fellow traveller and contributor." Hergott remained a lifelong friend of mine; I always found him to be skeptical of all political parties, and that certainly included communists. He would have been neither a fellow traveller nor a contributor.

Indigenous leaders: The RCMP was suspicious of Indigenous organizations and wanted to know about the people involved in them. Hadesbeck wrote: "The order came to compile all the names and addresses of Indian and Metis, who are members or fellow travelers or supporters of the Communist Party or left of centre politically." Hadesbeck's list was brief, which indicated that the local party, dominated by aging white men, could not provide much information. The notes included names from Indian-Métis Friendship Centres, the leaders of Métis locals, and some leaders in the Saskatchewan Native Women's Association. Peter Dubois, a Métis activist, was on the list, as was Hilliard McNab, the respected chief of Gordon Reserve. McNab was

a founding member of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations).

Howard Adams was an outspoken Métis leader. Prince Albert Historical Society, *Prince Albert Daily Herald* Collection, photo 17087, no date.

Hadesbeck's note of August 9, 1968, read: "Interested in Dr. Howard Adams regarding Indians said to be left of centre." Adams was Métis and one of the most outspoken leaders of his time. He was born in the predominantly Métis community of St. Louis, Saskatchewan. Perhaps most galling for the RCMP was the fact that he had once been one of them. When Adams finished high school in 1940, he joined the force but served for just four years. He later worked as a school counsellor and teacher in British Columbia, and then began to take university classes.

Adams earned a doctorate in 1966 from the University of California, Berkeley, in the history of education. He came to believe that the oppression of Blacks in the US had its parallel in the colonization experience of Métis and First Nations people in Canada. Adams spoke and wrote about colonialism with a blunt eloquence, and his leadership occurred at a time of political and cultural awakening among his people.

In 1966, Adams returned to teach in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. In 1969, he was elected as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan at a meeting of its forty-five locals held in Prince Albert. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Adams said that he would attempt to make the organization "a vanguard of the native liberation movement." The Security Service had someone in the room. That person reported: "During Adams acceptance speech and in particular when he started speaking about militancy, many members left the hall."[14]

The presence of an informant does not surprise Rob Milen, who went on to study law after his undergraduate years in Regina. Much of his legal work was for Métis organizations in Saskatchewan. "There is no question that the Métis were being watched," Milen told me in an interview. "There were always poor and desperate people who were willing to talk for a few dollars."[15]

Howard Adams, despite his scorching rhetoric, found that the rough-and-tumble style of Métis politics was not for him. He served a one-year term and chose not to run again in 1970, when Jim Sinclair, a Métis Society field worker, was elected to succeed him. The RCMP continued with its surveillance on Adams.

In November 1972, the Security Service in Regina circulated an internal report containing a partial transcript of an interview that Adams had provided to CBC Radio. He said that he expected his "Native brothers and sisters" would systematically harass the RCMP during the force's centennial year in 1973. The force had planned a long list of events, many of them in Western Canada, to celebrate its history. The report warned: "Adams still has considerable influence among Western Natives and likely primarily with the younger element." The author asked that a copy of the report be placed in a file called "General Conditions and Subversive Activities amongst Indians—Canada."[16]

In a letter attached to the report, the commanding officer of F Division in Regina instructed that the information, including comments by Adams, be circulated to divisions in neighbouring provinces. The officer informed his colleagues that a file would be opened to track criticisms of the RCMP in its centennial year. Early in 1973, the Security Service in Calgary wrote to F Division in Saskatchewan: “We would appreciate being aware should Adams intend to visit any Indian reservations or Métis sponsored meetings in the Calgary area.” The writer referred to the force’s “elaborate plans” for the centenary and was concerned that Adams might disrupt those efforts.[17]

On another occasion Hadesbeck was asked by his handlers: “What do the communists think of the American Indian Movement? What about our natives? Does the Communist Party work inside native groups?” After checking with party members, Hadesbeck’s answer was: “Very little contact with our natives. So say some local party members.”

In February 1973, members of the American Indian Movement joined disgruntled members of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota who had gone to court to remove a chief whom they accused of corruption. When that attempt failed, they occupied the town of Wounded Knee. The presence of AIM highlighted the broader issues of the US government’s genocide against Indigenous Peoples in the nineteenth century and its failure to fulfill treaties. Local activists and their AIM supporters controlled the town for seventy-one days. United States marshals, the FBI, and other law enforcement agencies cordoned off the area. There were armed confrontations and several people died.

In late March, within a few weeks of the occupation, an internal letter distributed by the Security Service reported that the RCMP had “increased its monitoring of the Indian community.” It said that there was among some Canadian Indigenous people a close association with AIM. The report said that the Métis Society of Saskatchewan had “contributed financially and physically to AIM’s cause.” The source of this information, whoever it was, quoted a Métis Society member who had returned from Wounded Knee as predicting it was just a matter of time before “armed confrontation” occurred between Métis people and the government.[18]

In April another Security Service document claimed that the Métis Society of Saskatchewan had donated $1,200 to support the AIM occupation, money that the RCMP said had been provided to the society by

the federal government. It concluded, as did most Security Service documents, that although key figures in the Métis Society were advocating a militant approach, they did not have the support of the membership.[19]

In the same month, the Security Service circulated another document to most of its divisions under the title “Red Power—Canada.” It included correspondence with the federal government covering what the RCMP described as “highlights of the Indian ‘problem’ as it relates to Canada.” The document was also prompted by the armed standoff at Wounded Knee: “The appearance of the American Indian Movement and its unifying factor in the Indian community has resulted in cross country travel in which we maintain an interest.”[20]

By June 1973, the Security Service decided to prepare a “Red Power” photo album under the file title of “Native Extremism.” A note added to the file said: “The principal function of the Red Power Photograph Album was to assist in the identification of Indian extremists.” In the same month, the Regina detachment reported that it had obtained photos of four “subjects” during a Métis Society sit-in at the Saskatchewan legislative building. The names of the four were redacted in the document, which resides in the files at Library and Archives Canada.[21]

As of June 1974, at least five copies of the album had been assembled and distributed to detachments in Western and Northern Canada, as well as to headquarters in Ottawa. A handwritten note in the file voiced at least a mild disapproval of the tactics employed: “There are some individuals who have been placed in the photograph album, who in addition to not meeting the criteria for inclusion, it is also questionable as to whether we should even be investigating their activities. When all submissions have been received, it will then be possible to remove those entries which are not applicable.” Despite those misgivings, the police contributed additional information to the album until at least mid-1976.[22]

Civil libertarians: The RCMP was suspicious of anyone promoting civil liberties. Hadesbeck’s lists indicated that the Security Service was interested in those involved in the Saskatchewan Association of Human Rights, a voluntary organization founded in 1968. Later, the RCMP asked for information on individuals appointed to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission created by the new NDP government in 1972.

Tillie Taylor was named as the commission's first chair. She had long been suspect to the RCMP. Taylor and her husband George were in the Communist Party in Calgary during the early 1940s, where they first met Frank Hadesbeck. The Taylors later returned to Saskatoon, where they both studied law. George was the first to graduate and practised in her father's law office. After their children were grown Tillie went to law school, receiving her degree in 1956. She was also involved in peace and social justice organizations, including the John Howard Society and the Voice of Women. The RCMP thought the latter organization was a communist front and regularly infiltrated the group. The Taylors left the Communist Party in the late 1940s and became members of the CCF.[23]

Tillie Taylor was a young communist who left the party in the 1940s. She later became a lawyer and a judge, circa 1963. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, S-MN-B3661.

In 1960, Tillie Taylor was appointed as a Magistrate of the Provincial Court, the first woman to be so named. The RCMP asked Hadesbeck to find out more about her. He made several notations. One read: “Something she said about the plight of Indian and Métis in Saskatchewan. Said to be a fellow traveller and a member of Calgary NCDR and still a contributor. So say some C. party members.”

When Allan Blakeney’s NDP government created the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, the RCMP wanted to know more about her. Hadesbeck wrote: “Judge Tillie Taylor, and Bill Gilbey, Regina, were again put on the Watch Out list. Something to do with the provincial Human Rights Commission. Said also to be former Communist Party supporters. Now both good NDP supporters … Also a Rev. Philip Loehr.”

The government appointed Gilbey and Father Loehr to the Human Rights Commission along with Taylor. Loehr was suspect because of his farm union connections. Gilbey was a gritty and tough-talking trade unionist. He had earlier been a member of the Communist Party but joined the NDP in 1961. The RCMP also wanted to know more about him: “Because of his support and donations to Regina Peace Council, a Communist Party dominated organization. Party member-at-large say local party members.” Another appointee as a commissioner to the Human Rights Commission was Chief Hilliard McNab.

By the time he was jotting down notes for a potential memoir in the late 1970s, Hadesbeck had come to understand the wider significance of his actions: “The basic objective, it seemed to me, was to maintain the status quo in the country, and therefore our responsibility was to infiltrate and inform on organizations or people who were wanting to change the status quo. Most people in this category would be left of centre.” The RCMP surveillance of the Communist Party was directed at a political organization that regularly fielded candidates in elections at every level. The federal government had banned the party in 1940, but that ban was finally lifted in 1956. Beyond that, the police were suspicious of anyone who exhibited a progressive bent. They engaged in indiscriminate surveillance.

CHAPTER 16

SPYING ON THE NDP

Although the Communist Party was Frank Hadesbeck's primary focus in Regina, his handlers were also vigilant about the New Democratic Party. Hadesbeck was told to keep an eye out for communists or sympathizers who might infiltrate the NDP. He kept notes about the meeting in January 1971, where officer Ivor Jenkins asked him to come out of retirement: "Ivor said they are not interested in the NDP as such. Only in certain people and groups on the extreme left of the NDP. The Waffle, Maoists, Trotskyites, Communists, or the extremes of Social Credit, old members of the CCF before it became the NDP."

By 1971, Tommy Douglas had been away from the province for ten years. He left, reluctantly, in 1961 to assume leadership of the federal NDP. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan (the provincial party retained that name for several years) was defeated in 1964, but in 1971 was returned to power. By then some predominantly younger members of the party were pursuing a more radical alternative.

The Waffle, more correctly described as the Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada, grew out of the left wing of the NDP. The group's name bore an ironic twist. Its founding members said that they preferred to waffle to the left rather than the right. The Waffle name stuck. It was a Canadian iteration of the New Left movements in other countries that arose from the youth rebellion of the 1960s. People attached to the Waffle movement described themselves as both socialists and economic

nationalists. They were concerned about domination of the Canadian economy by multinational corporations, particularly Americans.

The Waffle, not to mention the entire New Left, was seen as an unwelcome competitor by an aging cadre of Communist Party leaders. William Beeching wrote a letter to provincial members in 1973 about the "so-called socialist party" that the Waffle was hoping to create: "If the new party is formed … it will be committed to a policy of anti-Sovietism and anti-communism—which makes its claim of being different from its parent party, the NDP, difficult to substantiate."[1] The Waffle eventually responded to such criticisms in an open letter saying that the Communist Party was "too narrow and isolated to be able to rally the support needed for a revolutionary movement."[2]

Beeching had reason to be concerned because the New Left largely ignored his party. The youth and political movements saw the party as bureaucratic and slavishly devoted to the Soviet Communist Party, which they believed had lost credibility. The 1960s and beyond were years in which formerly colonized countries, many in Africa and Asia, engaged in liberation struggles. Those movements captured the attention and sympathy of young leftists, as did the Chinese Communist Party. Party chairman Mao Zedong's Little Red Book of quotations was a common accessory among campus militants describing themselves as Maoists. The Security Service, which had a limited understanding of 1960s radicalism, feared that disparate streams of the left, including Maoists and Trotskyites, were intent on infiltrating the NDP via the Waffle.

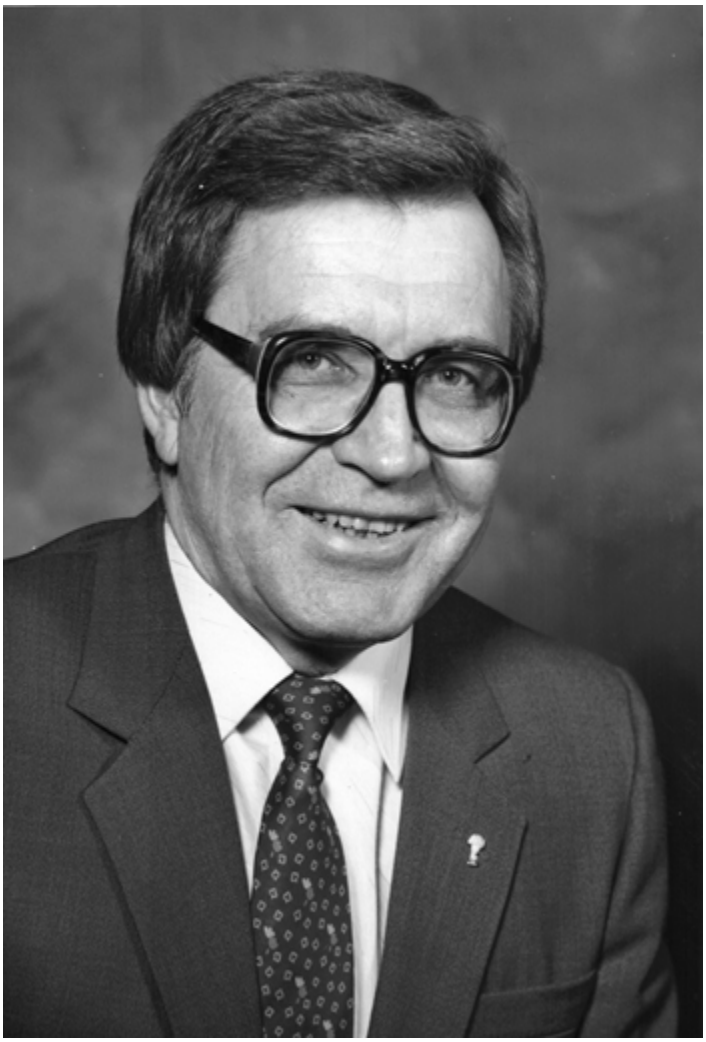
In Saskatchewan, the Waffle's presence heightened rifts within the NDP.[3] In March 1970, provincial leader Woodrow Lloyd resigned after internal criticism from members of his caucus. They were restive after two electoral losses to Ross Thatcher and the provincial Liberals. However, much of the criticism aimed at Lloyd said that he was too accommodating toward the Waffle. Some in the caucus believed that the Waffle was becoming a party within a party. Lloyd's resignation was followed by a leadership race culminating in a July 1970 convention. Lloyd was succeeded by Allan Blakeney, who was born in Nova Scotia but came to Saskatchewan as a young man in 1950. He'd served as a senior civil servant in the Douglas government. In 1960, he became a member of the provincial legislature and cabinet minister. Blakeney was a key government player

during the doctors' strike in 1962. Among his opponents in the 1970 leadership race were Don Mitchell, a candidate for the Waffle, and George Taylor, who represented the old left within the NDP.

In 1971, the NDP under Blakeney swept Thatcher's Liberals from power. In that election, Hadesbeck served as business manager for Communist Party candidate Fred Schofield in a Regina constituency. Schofield and his wife Fay were farmers in southwest Saskatchewan and loyal party members. He had served briefly as the party leader during William Beeching's truncated period on the party's Central Committee in Toronto. The NDP easily won the Regina seat and Schofield received forty-six votes out of the seventeen thousand cast.[4]

Blakeney's was an activist government that used Crown corporations as engines of the province's economic development. The government also established the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and created the Department of Northern Saskatchewan to foster economic development and provide a limited amount of self-government to Indigenous communities. The RCMP was on guard. It had long mistrusted human rights advocates, and was skeptical about talk of Indigenous rights. Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists contained the names of at least a dozen members of the NDP caucus, including Blakeney. Some government names on the list were among the more conservative members of caucus, which meant the RCMP was casting a wide net indeed.

In the same Key Sectors report that had derided professors at the Regina campus, the Security Service provided details of its surveillance of people within the NDP government. In a three-page report dated January 3, 1973, an officer, whose name is blacked out, said at least ten persons "of previous interest" had found jobs with the new NDP government.[5]



The RCMP suspected NDP cabinet minister Walter Smishek of harbouring communist sympathies. Photo courtesy Saskatchewan New Democratic Party.

The officer stressed the difficulty in developing sources within departments and agencies but promised improvements: “Presently we are undergoing a very delicate and sensitive source development program so that our endeavours may be met … needless to say that our work in this area will no doubt be accelerated once we have established a proper source network. The government themselves certainly do not believe in or practice subversive or suspect subversive activities, however, we suspect that the pro-waffle wing of this political party will attempt to invoke radical policies should they become an entity.”

Another sector report prepared a few months later, in May 1973, went considerably further.[6] It created a flow chart for several government

departments and provided the names and brief biographies of the ten employees whom the Security Service believed to be suspect. The health department was a main concern, and once again Walter Smishek's name appeared. In 1964, the NDP had recruited him as a candidate and he was elected. When Blakeney became premier in 1971, he appointed Smishek to the cabinet.

John Richards, a rookie member of the legislature, was appointed as Smishek's legislative secretary. An economist and a lecturer at the University of Saskatchewan, Richards was the sole member of Blakeney's caucus to describe himself as belonging to the Waffle. The RCMP's sector report said there had been "a considerable influx of New Left sympathizers" into the health department and blamed Smishek. The report described him as "a follower of Waffle politics," but claimed he would not admit it because he was in the cabinet.

The same report also focused on the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. The report commented on Ted Bowerman, the minister in charge: "He appears to be easily manipulated judging from the number of Waffle supporters he has surrounded himself with, however, we have nothing to indicate sympathy on his part towards extreme left-wing politics."

Tellingly, the report said that "the Communist Party has to the best of our knowledge taken no active part in government activities to the present time."

In 1973, the Saskatchewan Waffle decided to leave the NDP and continue as an extra-parliamentary movement. The Security Service followed that process closely. The Regina detachment produced reports in January, August, and September 1974. Two of them dealt with Waffle strategy conferences held at Camp Rayner on Lake Diefenbaker in central Saskatchewan. The information in the reports would have originated from someone at the meetings.[7]

Lorne Brown, a political science professor now retired from the University of Regina, was at the meetings chronicled in the reports. I provided him with the documents. In an interview, he said the reports were amateurish and inaccurate.[8] One described him as leading a "radical

faction” saying that the Waffle “must become a truly revolutionary group based on Marxist-Leninist theory.” Brown says: “I don’t know where they got that from. Whoever the source was may have picked up some hallway conversation.” Brown says he has no idea who might have been a police informant at Camp Rayner. “I didn’t really think about it. We were acting in the open and were not doing anything illegal.”

Don Mitchell, who had contested the provincial NDP leadership on behalf of the Waffle in 1970, was provincial chair of the group and attended the meetings at Camp Rayner. The Security Service report described him as leading a “conservative faction.” Mitchell said in an interview: “What passes as analysis in that report about factions makes no sense.” He added wryly, “I would have hoped at least to have made the centrist faction.”[9] Mitchell later spent fifteen years as a city councillor and then became the mayor of Moose Jaw, his home community.

Don Kossick was described in one report as a “National Farmers Union radical” and his life partner Denise Kouri as “an ex-campus radical.” In an interview recalling the 1974 Waffle meetings, Kouri said, “I would never have expected anything like that. It makes you realize that we were doing interesting things in a positive way. But it gives you an odd feeling. What the heck were they doing there, invading our privacy?”[10] In later years, Kouri became a respected researcher in social policy and health care, and manager of an international development project.

A youthful Don Mitchell ran for the NDP leadership in 1970. Photo circa 1969. Courtesy Don Mitchell.

Kossick told me, “The Camp Rayner meeting was part of a debate within the left of the NDP, although the Waffle later split with the NDP. What gets me really upset is that it’s not as if we were going to do something explosive that the police should worry about. It was people trying to make good positive change. We had a right to organize. It’s part of civil society. So why were they going after us?”[11]

Kossick had been tagged by the Security Service as a person of interest as early as his days as a university student. He became a farm union and labour organizer and was a CUSO volunteer to Mozambique. In 2023, he was awarded the Order of Canada for his lifetime of activism.

In the Secret Service report dated September 24, 1974, twenty-six of the attendees at the Waffle conference were given special treatment. Behind each name was a brief description; various individuals were labelled "women's libbers," "campus radicals," or "New Left sympathizers." Michael O'Sullivan, who was prominent in organizing the strategy session, was described as a "past Trotskyist sympathizer." Several people were described as supporters of the Canada-China Friendship Association.[12]

Behind each name in the report provided by Library and Archives Canada, there is a blacked-out space. An accompanying comment from the investigating officer indicates that the names were accompanied by "corresponding file numbers." In other words, there was likely a file on each of these individuals. At the end of the report, there is a notice that the following fifty-two pages of the file were withheld from distribution. It is almost certain that those pages contain information on people at the meeting. The withholding of information is a frequent problem for researchers who make access to information requests.

Another report from the RCMP's F Division in Regina described the Waffle's intention "to support natives in provincial elections."[13] The Waffle organized an event in Regina that included Rod Bishop and Bud Pocha, Métis activists from the North. The Security Service report was titled "Red Power—Saskatchewan." The author was volatile in describing the meeting: "The main purpose of the meeting appeared to be to prepare the people in Southern Saskatchewan for coming violence in the North." The RCMP investigator to whom the report was sent added an observation: "It is possible that violence may occur in the north because of agitation by the Waffle and the Métis Society of Saskatchewan."

The NDP won re-election in 1975 and again in 1978, when Premier Blakeney appointed Jerry Hammersmith as minister for the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. Hammersmith was an educator who became an outfitter and a bush pilot. He had worked as a consultant for various First Nations and was a person of interest to the RCMP well before his election in 1978. Hadesbeck's 1973 note on Hammersmith read: "Said to be an

anarchist. Something he said about the Native question in Saskatchewan and South Dakota. Has he ever been mentioned at Communist Party meetings? Some Communist Party members say he writes for the *New Breed*, a native newspaper. Is considered a good Communist Party member prospect. Favors Indian and Métis in most of his speeches and writings. A good fellow traveller say party members."

Hadesbeck willingly shared whatever scant information he had regarding the RCMP's Indigenous targets. He seems never to have connected those efforts intellectually to the Métis ancestry of his wife, Bernadette.

Officers of the Security Service provided Hadesbeck with the names of local people to investigate, but occasionally headquarters requested information on individuals in other provinces. That appears to be a waste of resources, but it had its own logic. Hadesbeck described it this way: "When a certain person comes to their attention, he/she is investigated and put under surveillance. This is done by a nationwide check of all the special agents, something like a Gallup poll. To gather all possible connections and to connect the person to the Communist Party or its many front organizations so that the person can be classed a 'red-pink' or just a fellow traveller."

The Security Service was interested in Farley Mowat, who twice visited Siberia and wrote about it. Hadesbeck scribbled half a dozen notes about Mowat in his files, beginning in 1956: "Said to be a contributor. Some say a C. party member." In 1969 Hadesbeck's handlers asked: "Is he mentioned or discussed at Com. Party meetings?" Hadesbeck's response: "He is a good contributor and is left of centre politically. Is very concerned about natives. Also a good NDP supporter. Was to the Soviet Union in 1966. So say some Com party members." In 1974, Hadesbeck was asked: How much of a friend of the Soviet Union does the party think he is? The reply: "Some party members say he is just a good fellow traveller and a contributor to the CCF-NDP. But could be a party member-at-large."

Author Pierre Berton appeared on Hadesbeck's lists on several occasions. In 1960: "Something he said at some anti-apartheid committee meeting. A good contributor says some C. party members." In 1969:

“Something he said in Winnipeg at a Manitoba Civil Liberties Association and the Manitoba Human Rights Association.” In 1971: “About the Amchitka nuclear test.” In 1972: “In Edmonton about the Canadian education system. Berton is said to be a close friend of a Communist Party member and a good friend of Rabbi [Abraham] Feinberg [an anti-war activist]. A good contributor and fellow traveller say some Communist Party members, a good contributor to Communist Party ideals.”

Among the many other prominent Canadians mentioned in Hadesbeck’s Watch Out lists were Tom Berger, a British Columbia lawyer, and years later a judge and royal commissioner; writer June Callwood; Adrienne Clarkson, broadcaster and eventually governor general; musician Stompin’ Tom Connors; peace activist Claire Culhane; Walter Gordon and Herb Grey, left-leaning Liberal cabinet ministers; Lotta Hitschmanova, long-time director of the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada; publisher Mel Hurtig; Tom Kent, a policy adviser to Lester Pearson; Eric Kierans, a left-leaning Liberal cabinet minister in the Pearson and Trudeau governments; scientist and environmentalist David Suzuki; and political economist Mel Watkins.

The Security Service’s queries of Hadesbeck were at times recklessly loose in their description of individuals. Hadesbeck’s replies were often vague and at times demonstrably inaccurate. In 1965 the RCMP asked about Alvin Hamilton, a Saskatchewan member of Parliament who had been minister of agriculture in the Diefenbaker government. Hadesbeck reported as follows: “Said to be a Maoist and a supporter of China’s leftist politics. So say the C. party members.”

It is puzzling to have Hamilton, a lifelong Progressive Conservative politician, described as a Maoist, but there is a possible explanation. It was under Hamilton that the government led by John Diefenbaker negotiated its first deal to sell Canadian wheat to communist China in 1958. The Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties had once been allies but later became bitter adversaries. The Canadian party was firmly in the Soviet orbit. The erroneous description of Hamilton as a Maoist by local communists may have reflected the animosity of Hadesbeck’s Russian-centric comrades, or perhaps Hadesbeck was inventing material to peddle to his handlers, who did not appear to know any better.

CHAPTER 17

HADESBECK'S HANDLERS

Frank Hadesbeck continued to provide reports to the Security Service until 1977, and, on occasion, for a few more years. An inveterate note taker, he documented the names of his handlers. These officers would have started out as recruits who attended the RCMP's depot in Regina for six months of basic training. For most of its existence, the Security Service did not exist as a separate branch, but was rather under the wing of the RCMP's Criminal Investigation Branch. The officers assigned to counter-subversion and surveillance work had not signed up specifically for that assignment and received no special training for it.

In earlier days, many were immigrants from Great Britain, but that changed over the years. The Canadian-born recruits were drawn mainly from working-class or farm families. It was not until the 1970s that they required a high school diploma to enlist, a requirement that has not changed. Recruits experienced, and still do, a rigid and militaristic training regimen, what Christian Leuprecht, a professor at the Royal Military College and Queen's University, describes as "a certain type of command-and-control mindset."[1] Once training in Regina was completed, recruits were likely to be posted in small-town, rural, or northern settings. The RCMP had, and continues to have, contracts to provide policing services in most provinces and territories.

The RCMP's paramilitary model is reinforced in varying ways. In their book *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, authors Lorne and Caroline

Brown examine back issues of the force's magazine, the *RCMP Quarterly*, over a forty-year period. "Articles dealing with political subjects," they write, "have without exception been right-wing in orientation, and often even in the category of extreme right."[2]

They cite as one example the *Quarterly*'s reprinting of a speech made in 1935 by C. E. Edgett. He was a former First World War army colonel who had been chief constable of the Vancouver Police Department until he was fired in 1933. In his speech to a Synod of the Presbyterian church in 1936, Edgett criticized "teachers, preachers and editors" for advocating "sympathy for the Reds." He went on to describe communism as part of a Jewish conspiracy and to express his support for the military coup led by General Franco in Spain. Not all rank-and-file RCMP officers may have agreed with those extremist sentiments, but they were openly on display.

The RCMP leadership also mistrusted academics, journalists, and people in government departments like Foreign Affairs, who often had a university education from prominent schools such as Queen's or McGill University, or English universities like Oxford.

When, in 1980, journalist John Sawatsky wrote *Men in the Shadows*, the RCMP leadership declined to co-operate. But Sawatsky had good sources and interviewed officers across the country, agreeing not to name them. He describes them as a group with "conservative leanings" but "varying attributes."[3]

Sawatsky writes that while members of the Security Service worked in RCMP divisions in various provinces, they answered to their own superiors in Ottawa rather than to local commanders. They were a group set apart, and their relationship with their colleagues, whose main role was criminal investigation, was not always an easy one. The security officers possessed secrets they could not share, and to obtain them, they might break the law they were sworn to uphold. One of their primary tasks was to manage informants whose identities were closely guarded.[4]

The system for collecting, filing, and redistributing information was elaborate and cumbersome. Each time Hadesbeck was debriefed, his handler wrote a report that went into a filing system at headquarters in Ottawa. The reports described Hadesbeck by a code number rather than a name. Hadesbeck claimed in his notes that his agent number was 810. His name would appear only within a set of files titled "Informers," which was

maintained by the RCMP's L Section at headquarters. The information was kept in a Chubb safe and only a few officers in L Section had access to it. When information was released back into the service's general filing system, or sent out to locations across the country, the agent would be described by code number but never by name.[5]

Sawatsky describes the service going even further to protect its sources. It would, at times, open dummy surveillance files for informers like Hadesbeck to guard their identity. A report that originated from Hadesbeck about a Communist Party meeting or event in Regina might also list him as one of those attending. No ordinary member of the RCMP, nor most members of the Security Service reading such a report, would know that Hadesbeck was an informant. That knowledge was available only to his handlers and a select few higher-ups in Ottawa.[6]

Sawatsky's journalistic observation is consistent with Hadesbeck's description. In one of his handwritten notes, Hadesbeck wrote: "Roy [a handler] told me that besides men in the field who know their individual informants, only three-four in the force in Ottawa know the names of all the informants working for the force from coast to coast in Canada."[7]

Throughout the 1970s, Hadesbeck dealt with several Security Service handlers in Regina. They included, in addition to Ivor Jenkins, the following officers: Larry Reddy, Dave Miller, Larry Callens, George Muzika, Tom Lightfoot, Dave Service, Joe Hrankowski, Robert Mills, and Donald Gehring.[8] These men served in the city at the times Hadesbeck described. A review of *Henderson's Directory* shows entries for most of them. They were described as either belonging to the RCMP or being Canadian government employees. In other cases, their occupations were not listed, but their addresses, phone numbers, and other identifying details corresponded to Hadesbeck's notes.

They are also listed on the RCMP Graves website, which describes officers Service, Reddy, and Muzika as having been members of the Security Service. Some of those who dealt with Hadesbeck later became prominent in the force. Robert Mills was the commanding officer of the RCMP training depot in Regina from 1975 to 1978, and of the entire F

Division in Saskatchewan from 1978 to 1981. He later served as an RCMP assistant commissioner.[9]

Hadesbeck met with one or another of them every couple of weeks, most often in a hotel room. They provided him with names and photos and told him to make discreet inquiries. Here is a sampling:[10]

- February 16, 1967: Don Gehring, Security Service, Regina. "To talk about the Mac-Paps, Spain and Lionel Edwards in Vancouver." Edwards was a Spanish Civil War veteran and a long-time party member in Alberta.
- May 9, 1969: "To talk about some printed matter, and Mac-Pap letter and showed me some pictures of males, but I didn't recognize any for him."
- December 4, 1969: "About Patrick Watson and CBC program." Watson was a prominent CBC broadcaster.
- June 8, 1970: "[Gehring] asked me what I knew about Ed Holgate, Regina." Holgate was a university student involved with the student newspaper the *Carillon*.
- June 12, 1970: "Don asked me what I knew about A. J. McKeown. Don left for Vancouver, B.C., Aug. 1970 to work for BC Hydro." McKeown was a community activist and later a member of Regina city council.
- January 29, 1971: "Ivor Jenkins came to my house to talk about Bill Beeching, Sask Communist Party leader."
- March 15 and March 23, 1971: "About Mac-Paps history in Spain."
- May 31, 1971: "Siesta Motel. Ivor had Larry Reddy with him. Unit #20."
- October 29, 1971: "#101 Plains Hotel, made plans for the 50th Communist Party banquet and upcoming Comm Party convention and election of party officers. Room service with club steaks."
- November 1, 1971: "Ivor Jenkins and Tom Lightfoot took a tape recording of what went on at the provincial Communist Party convention."
- November 25, 1971: "Plains Hotel #120. Tom Lightfoot paid me $50 for Nov. 1971."
- February 27, 1972: "Ivor, Holiday Inn #109 to show me some photos."

- April 11, 1972: “Tom Lightfoot at the Plains Hotel #130 to look at some names and pictures.”
- June 28, 1972: “Sherwood Motel #104, about some names and photos. Ivor bought my Waterbury clock and some bedroom furniture.”
- August 31, 1972: “Golden West Motel, #122. Tom again, had Dave Service with him.”
- November 2, 1972: “Again Dave, Sherwood Motel #128.”
- February 8, 1973: “Again Dave, Intowner Motel #12.”
- March 20, 1973: “Dave Service. A letter to say I should mail my reports to Post Office Box 221, Regina, SK.”
- May 28, 1973: “Again Dave at Sherwood Motel.”
- January 5, 1974: “Joe Hrankowski at his home, 60 Gardiner Ave. Regina, SK. Phone 586-4906. He wants to know about Bill Kardash.” Kardash was a communist who served in Spain and was later a member of the Manitoba legislature.
- February 24, 1975. “Joe again asked about Kardash.”
- June 6, 1975. “Regina Inn #519. Joe had Ivor Jenkins with him and took a tape recording of our meeting.”

Hadesbeck was not a big player. He did not have access to sensitive state secrets. He was one of many foot soldiers embedded as informants in the Communist Party. He and the others were provided with only selective information. Theirs was to do and not to think. They served as sleuths on behalf of the RCMP, often going where officers could not. They were paid in cash. At times Hadesbeck made passing reference about that in his notes. At a meeting in a Regina hotel room in November 1971, officer Tom Lightfoot gave him $50 in what Hadesbeck described as pay for the month. That would be equivalent to about $340 in current dollars, and he did not pay tax on it. It was a modest top-up for a blue-collar worker, but by no means a bonanza.

It was unusual for an informant to work for as long as Hadesbeck did. Often, informants would be unmasked by party members and expelled. If not that, they would burn out, exhausted by the psychological toll exacted by living a double life. Hadesbeck was neither a leader nor an intellectual in a party that had theories extolling the scientific nature of communism and

its historical inevitability. Fellow party member Ed Lehman, who considered Hadesbeck a friend, described him in this way: “He had a basic working-class understanding. He was intelligent but without a lot of schooling. He was not capable of playing an ideological role regarding the concepts of socialism.”[11]

Hadesbeck was, above all, a canny survivor whose lengthy tenure may have been unmatched. He had been expelled from the party in 1945, but it is not clear whether that was for being critical of the Alberta leadership or if he had been unmasked as an agent. In any case, he was able to overcome that hurdle and rejoin the party in Regina during the 1950s. Hadesbeck’s story offers a window not only into his personality, but also into the machinations of the Security Service and the Communist Party during his day.

What did the police do with all the information that they collected on so many people? Even before the creation of the RCMP, as we have seen, the Royal North-West Mounted Police was able to pick up thousands of so-called enemy aliens during the First World War. Shortly after it was created in 1921, the RCMP told Ottawa that it could apprehend hundreds of people on short notice. The level of surveillance only increased during the years of the Great Depression and during the Second World War. In 1940, the government invoked the *War Measures Act*, and an RCMP dragnet scooped up hundreds of Communist Party activists and detained them in prison camps. The police were also instrumental in detaining Japanese Canadians and sending them to internment camps.

The search for subversives gained a new momentum following the revelations related to the defection in 1945 of Igor Gouzenko. It became clear that some civil servants, and Fred Rose, a member of Parliament, had passed on information to the Russians. The government established the Kellock-Taschereau Royal Commission, and under its auspices a group of suspects were detained and interrogated in secret and without access to legal counsel.[12] The commission publicly named about twenty Canadians as having acted as spies for the Soviet Union. About half of them were eventually convicted, but the secrets they had provided turned out to be relatively minor.

The royal commission recommended a security screening system for public employees. In 1946, a Security Panel was created with participation from the three military services and the RCMP along with a small secretariat chaired by the secretary to the cabinet. The panel created a procedural outline for the screening, one that remained secret. The RCMP played a central role in investigating and identifying potential security risks among government employees, including those in the Department of External Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office.[13]

There is significant scholarship to show that people deemed suspect by the RCMP were harassed, denied employment and promotions, or even fired in government, unions, the media, and academia. Careers were ruined and lives shattered. There was a vigorous campaign from the early 1950s into the 1960s to pursue and dismiss homosexuals, particularly in the civil service; they were considered security threats by their very nature.[14] This refutes any argument that people targeted for surveillance had nothing to fear if they had nothing to hide.

Information gleaned by surveillance was also used in a top-secret project called PROFUNC (an abbreviation for Prominent Functionaries of the Communist Party). Beginning in the late 1940s, representatives from the Departments of National Defence and Justice worked with the RCMP to compile lists of communists and others who would be arrested simultaneously at night without warrant, and interned without trial should hostilities occur with the Soviet Union or China. The action could also be undertaken if the government declared a national emergency for reasons short of war. The RCMP began to assemble names in 1948. Existence of the list was revealed only in the 1970s during research being conducted for the McDonald Commission into questionable RCMP activities. The files became available to researchers only in 2010, when historian and illustrator Frances Reilly wrote a PhD thesis on the topic.[15]

The names of potential PROFUNC internees were kept in sealed envelopes filed at RCMP detachments across the country, so they could be acted upon with short notice. Each file included details that would allow for quick identification and arrests: the age, physical description, and photos of individuals, as well as their addresses and vehicle information. In some cases, the plans included provision for the detention of women and the internment of their children. An evolving list was kept of internment

locations across the country, which included military sites, prisons, and penitentiaries.

The number of individuals whom the RCMP identified for surveillance peaked in the mid-1950s at between ten and eleven thousand. Of that number, the interdepartmental committee approved close to three thousand for potential apprehension. The numbers declined in the 1970s as it became clear even to the RCMP that they were targeting an aging group of communists who posed no threat, if ever they had. Still, the list was discontinued only in 1983. Reilly, the researcher who discovered the documents, said that after their release Canadians were "astonished and horrified to learn the extent to which the RCMP surveilled civilians over the decades … The declassified records reveal material on tens of thousands of Canadian men and women, including their associations and political activity, their children, their homes and their employment and workplaces."[16]

No doubt some of the people on Frank Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists in Calgary and Regina were on the PROFUNC list as well. In Calgary, they would have included Ben Swankey and Pat Lenihan, both of whom were interned during the Second World War, and likely their wives. In Saskatchewan those identified for arrest would certainly have included William Beeching, who had also been interned, as well as party members like Norman Brudy, Nelson and Phyllis Clarke, Fred Schofield, and others.

During much of PROFUNC's existence, between the late 1940s and 1983, the Communist Party was a legal entity. It had a right to put forward candidates in elections, take positions on public policy, and engage in debate, just like any other political party. Yet the RCMP surveillance upon its members was massive and intrusive. In one case, the Security Service had an officer following William Beeching on a visit he made to Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in 1963. The officer reported to his superiors that near the end of his visit, Beeching could not start his car. He walked to a store called Shop Easy and bought a set of battery jumper cables. He attached them to the battery in a friend's car and boosted his. The officer ends by saying: "Beeching then proceeded directly to #1 Highway and quit Swift Current heading eastbound. Surveillance ended."[17] This detailed rendering of perfectly ordinary behaviour is farcical, but the report was dutifully filed away in the RCMP's L Section vault.

The Communist Party complained repeatedly about surveillance and harassment. In January 1960, Beeching wrote to both Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and Saskatchewan attorney general Robert Walker about an incident in Regina. William Kashtan, a member of the party's central executive committee, was there to participate in peace movement events. Beeching told Diefenbaker: "We were met at the airport by the RCMP. They sat outside our office during the day. They followed us about wherever we went, and even waited for us in the restaurant when we went to eat." Beeching reminded Diefenbaker that the Communist Party was a legal entity. The RCMP's actions, he said, were aimed at "suppressing free and unhampered discussion about total disarmament which is now at the centre of world attention."[18]

In 1963, Beeching wrote to Donald Fleming, the federal justice minister, to protest behaviour by the RCMP that he described as threatening. He said the police called on landlords with questions about their tenants. They visited people who had attended meetings addressed by communist speakers. They questioned trade union members about their fellow union members. They sat outside meeting halls or people's homes, visibly writing down names and car licence numbers. Beeching said the intention was to intimidate people, especially those involved in the peace movement. He asked the minister to call off the police.[19]

Hadesbeck would have been in the room when party members complained about RCMP surveillance. Likely, he added to the criticisms. Later in the week, he would meet with his handlers to tell them all about it. It is surprising that in a city as small as Regina, he could have met regularly with his RCMP contacts for so many years without being discovered.

CHAPTER 18

WINDING DOWN

By the mid-1970s Frank Hadesbeck had every reason to be winding down. He would soon be seventy years old. He was planning to leave his day job with the General Tractor company after working there for twenty-five years. His notes show that in September 1976, his RCMP handler Roy M invited him to a meeting at the Holiday Inn in Regina. The invitation was not unusual because hotel rooms were the most frequent venue for debriefings. On this occasion, Roy M was accompanied by three other officers. Each of them, Larry Reddy, Larry Callens, and George Muzika, had been Hadesbeck's contact at one time or another. "There was some rum and beer drunk," Hadesbeck wrote. "Also Roy and I had a full course meal."[1]

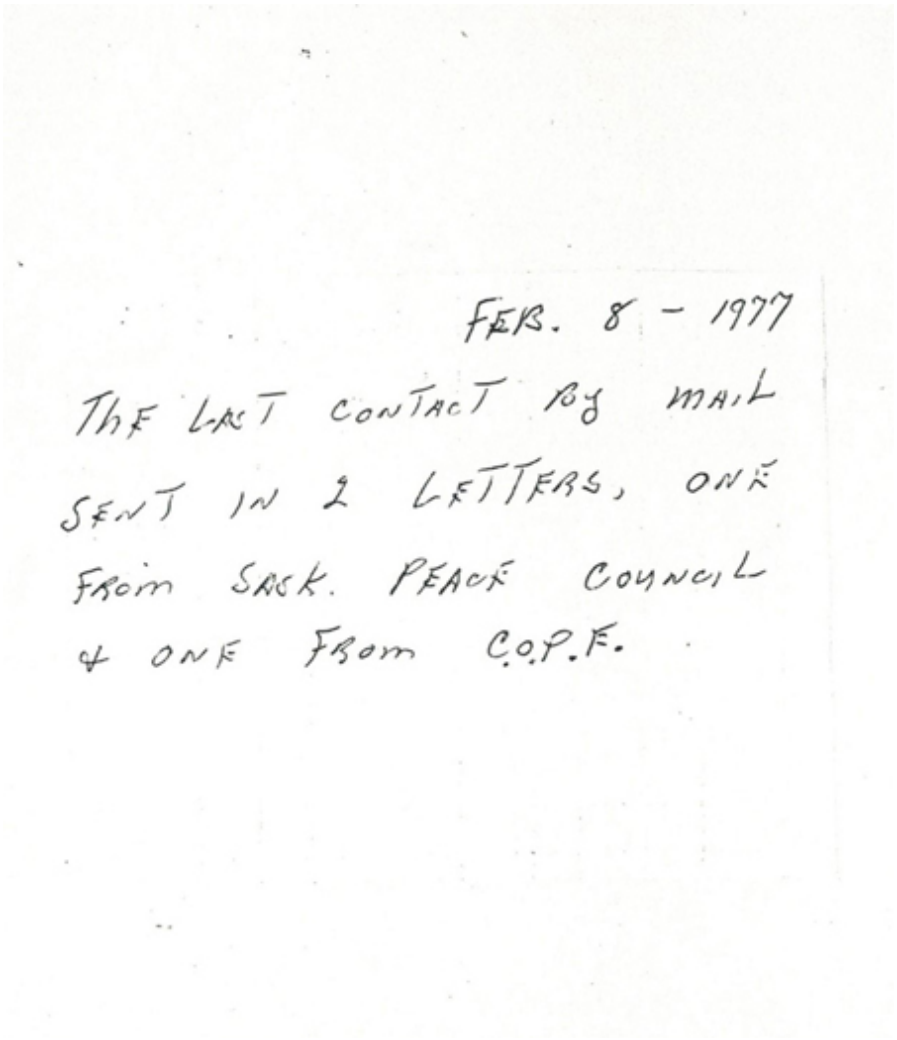
At some point the purpose of the meeting became clear. Hadesbeck's career as a civilian informant was over: "I had to sign a paper, but got no copy for myself, that I would keep my connections with the security force secret and not contact them again in any way." The RCMP no longer needed him, and they were cutting him loose. The Security Service in the 1970s began to close old files, and some of its attention shifted away from the Communist Party toward New Left groups like the Waffle and to separatists in Quebec.[2] Hadesbeck was handed fifteen $100 bills, the equivalent of about $6,800 today. He wrote: "This was for services rendered, but no pension."

Hadesbeck's files also contain a draft letter written in the same month, but without a specific date. In it, he resigned from the Communist Party.

“Thank you for your confidence over the years as a member of the Communist Party,” he wrote, likely missing the irony of that statement. “However, because of age and health reasons, I am bowing out as a party member.” If he was no longer an informant, there would be no reason for him to continue with his party membership.

But the break with the Security Service turned out not to be immediate. Hadesbeck’s files indicate that despite being let go, he continued for a time to collect party mail from the post office box and provide the contents to his handlers. He also gave the officers a key to the mailbox so that they could make a duplicate copy. In a note dated February 8, 1977, he wrote: “The last contact by mail. Sent in two letters. One from Saskatchewan Peace Council and one from the Committee of Progressive Electors.” In another note, Hadesbeck wrote that he had keys cut for the post office box and the party office and provided them to the Security Service. In yet a later note, he wrote that he continued to be shown pictures by the Security Service and asked about persons of interest until 1980.[3]

Hadesbeck’s behaviour is difficult to understand because he found his abrupt dismissal to be traumatic. He believed that he deserved, and had been promised, a pension when he retired. What he got was a wad of cash and a warning to keep quiet and stay away from his handlers. He was bitter, recalling what officer Ivor Jenkins had told him when he called him back to work in 1971. Hadesbeck paraphrased Jenkins: “Although no promises can be made, you can be assured that you will be cared for in retirement.”



Frank Hadesbeck's handwritten note about his last work for the Security Service, 1977. Frank Hadesbeck personal papers.

To appreciate Hadesbeck's distress, we must understand his near complete isolation. He had avoided close relationships during his many years as an agent. Friendships and the sharing of confidences would have been dangerous. His relationship with a succession of Security Service handlers may have been transactional for the handlers, but he had convinced himself that he was one of them. They were perhaps among the only friendly acquaintances that he had. Hadesbeck could share more with them than with anyone else. Their gestures of friendship, whether sincere or cynical, were better than nothing for a lonely old man.

For his seventieth birthday in May 1976, a few months before his dismissal, several officers had a party for him. "The boys were surprised at my good health and sharp mind," he wrote. "The boss told me that very few

special agents stay on for more than ten years, and that I must have nerves of steel."

Other encounters he had with the RCMP officers contained an added dimension of friendship. He sold a clock and some furniture to officer Ivor Jenkins. He sold his coin set to George Muzika. In June 1975, Hadesbeck met for a debriefing with two other officers at the Holiday Inn. He wrote: "Joe used the room that evening to swim with his wife and son." A few months later: "At Joe's home for a drink and to meet his wife Viki and son Joe at 60 Gardiner Ave." In December there was another meeting at the Holiday Inn: "Joe had Larry Reddy with him and a bottle of white rum."

In April 1976, Hadesbeck wrote that officer Roy M became his handler after Joe Hrankowski moved to Ottawa. Hadesbeck noted that M had purchased Hrankowski's house in Regina. Hadesbeck was obviously fond of Hrankowski's wife because after their move to Ottawa he sent her a gift of a cup and saucer. She did not respond: "I received no answer that she received it, and I was sure they were my friends."

On other occasions, Hadesbeck's handlers took him into their confidence to complain about their superiors and fellow officers. They even included him in some minor rule breaking. Hadesbeck wrote in 1970: "Driven to small town just to put miles on their car." He wrote in 1972 about how some of his handlers inflated their expenses related to his service: "A special agent's pay and expenses are charged to surveillance source information. This usually was a room at one of the hotels or motels with a full course meal. Sometimes three or four others would come and go just to get in on the food and liquor. No names were mentioned in the introductions since they had nothing to do with me or my contact."

Another of his handlers told him that an officer's wife drove a truck that was illegally powered by purple gas. The Saskatchewan government, for a time, allowed farmers to avoid paying taxes on gasoline used in their trucks. A purple dye was added to that gasoline to identify it as being tax exempt. People using purple gas for non-farm purposes were subject to fines if they were caught.

On another occasion, a handler complained to him about the careerist "mountiecrats" who made their way to RCMP headquarters in Ottawa while other officers had to slug it out in the field. "The whiz kids of this group go on to the top echelon, while the rest had to stay back and do the mediocre

task of enforcing the law," Hadesbeck wrote. The officer also relayed to Hadesbeck the resentment felt by career officers when John Starnes became the first civilian director of the RCMP Security Service in 1970.[4]

Was the sharing of these confidences by Hadesbeck's handlers, and their including him in minor misdemeanours, all part of an act to keep him compliantly in their orbit? Or were these at least acts of friendship? We cannot dismiss the latter possibility. Historian Steve Hewitt has researched and written about surveillance by the RCMP and other police forces. He writes about how close relationships can develop between handlers and their informants: "Because of the regular meetings and the all-pervading secrecy surrounding their assignation, closer relationships, not dissimilar to an illicit affair, frequently develop between handlers and informers. Ironically, trust is all important in a relationship based on betrayal." Hewitt describes how one retired RCMP intelligence officer continued to socialize with past informants even after losing contact with his former police colleagues.[5]

Hadesbeck continued his relationship with Jenkins, who moved to British Columbia after he retired from the RCMP in 1977. Hadesbeck made frequent trips to the West Coast to visit his ailing older sister Susanna Ritter and his niece Phyllis Pederson. On one of those visits, he asked Pederson if he might invite a friend over for a visit. Pederson overheard them talking about their work on behalf of the Secret Service. That man was Ivor Jenkins. In a December 1980 letter to Pederson, Hadesbeck thanked her for allowing him to have friends over: "Ivor said it was very nice of you to go through all of that extra trouble."[6]

In a similar manner, Hadesbeck's relationship with officer Roy M continued for at least several years after the meeting where he was dismissed in 1976. In April 1978, he reported that M invited him to the Holiday Inn for a chat. In June, they had lunch together and drank a six-pack of beer. In that meeting, M gave him $60, the equivalent of about $220 today. In September, M paid a visit to his room: "Roy had two Kentucky chicken dinners and a 13-ounce bottle of rum. He also gave me $65 in cash."

In November 1978, M paid Hadesbeck another visit: "He gave me $35. He also borrowed my small typewriter to do his university thesis paper on the Sask Indian question." It may have been uncomfortable for professors at the University of Regina to have an RCMP officer in their classes. It would

have been even more so had they known he was a Security Service officer whose job was to collect information on people like them.

Eventually, M was candid with Hadesbeck about his status: “Roy told me that I was never one of their team. The special agent description and the badge number 810 was just a game the RCMP played on their informers to make them feel more important and to remove any stigma these people may attach to the fact of being just an informer.”

Hadesbeck had convinced himself that he was one of the boys. In his private notes, he talked about how he was on a par with them, except that he had never attended the “buffalo academy,” his sardonic name for the RCMP training depot in Regina. He did have a personal relationship with his handlers, but ultimately, for them the relationship had to be transactional. M’s comments were a reminder that the handler was always in charge. Unless, that is, Hadesbeck might one day have the last word by telling his secret story to a public audience.

Bernadette and Frank Hadesbeck at their Regina home, circa 1965. Courtesy Phyllis Pederson.

Hadesbeck's personal life in the 1970s became chaotic and increasingly lonely. His wife, Bernadette, had died suddenly in July 1970. In late June, she had written a warm letter to their niece Phyllis Pederson in Delta, BC, talking about attending a family wedding and dancing so much that it took her days to get over it.[7] Ten days later she died suddenly. Hadesbeck sent a telegram to Pederson, followed by a letter to her and her family.[8] Bernadette, he wrote, had not been feeling well at dinner, so she went into the bedroom to lie down. He was reading the newspaper when he heard a strange sound. When he investigated, Bernadette was non-responsive. Hadesbeck rushed to a neighbour's house to get help, but they returned to find that Bernadette was dead. An autopsy indicated that it was a heart attack caused by a blood clot. "I miss her so," he wrote. "We had twenty-nine happy years."

There is little on the public record to describe Bernadette, as is the case for so many women of her time. But she did have an active social life centred around family. There were frequent trips to Balcarres and Fort Qu'Appelle to visit with brothers and sisters, and those visits were reciprocated. There were close relationships with several nieces and nephews, which continued even after some of them left the province in search of education and work.

Bernadette was also embedded in a church community. Among papers that Hadesbeck eventually left with Phyllis Pederson, there is a certificate indicating that Bernadette was a "perpetual member" of the church's Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an international association that coordinates assistance for Catholic missionaries. There is also an envelope addressed to Bernadette from a missionary in Ecuador, along with a pamphlet asking that she donate five dollars a month toward helping an Ecuadoran boy to become a priest.

In the week following her death in July 1970, the bulletin of St. Cecelia's Roman Catholic parish asked congregants to "pray for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Hadesbeck, who died suddenly last Thursday." Her funeral was a sombre requiem mass. According to a memorial booklet from the funeral, nine individuals or families ordered masses to be celebrated on subsequent days and weeks for her departed soul. The memorial booklet was signed by seventy people attending the funeral. Hadesbeck, always one to keep notes, had a handwritten tally indicating he had received twenty-four sympathy

cards and twenty phone calls, and that there were sixteen cars in the funeral procession.[9]

Pederson says, “He was devastated when she died. I think she settled him, made him a part of her family and she of his. They were soulmates. Losing her so unexpectedly was an extremely difficult pill for him to swallow.”[10]

Hadesbeck’s situation and state of mind during the 1970s and early 1980s is best captured in the letters that he regularly sent to Pederson. In 1972, he sold the comfortable home that he had shared with Bernadette and moved into a series of apartments, suites, and rooms. At other times, he would house-sit for people. In his letters, he mused about buying a home in a small town or a cottage at a lake, or living in a camper van, but he never did.

Because he moved around so much, Hadesbeck was often without telephone service. When his older brother John died in Oregon, no one could reach him in time, and Hadesbeck missed the funeral. “Yes, it’s true that I move with monotonous regularity,” he once wrote to Pederson. She says, “That willingness to change jobs and places of residence was, I think, partly due to his upbringing and not having a permanent home. He was a man without roots and auntie gave him that.”

Hadesbeck certainly had enough money to be well housed, but he was preoccupied with security. In a letter to Pederson in February 1979, he provided a list of his investments totalling about $70,000. That would be the equivalent of $265,000 today. He said that his New Year’s resolution was “to stop squireling away every dollar I can spare into a retirement fund.” But in the same letter, he complained about the high cost of living and the erosion of income and savings, and he spoke bitterly about having to pay income tax. “This a is tax rip-off of our senior citizens,” he said.

Hadesbeck announced in the letter that he was taking his will back from a lawyer whom he had hired as an executor for his estate. He did not want to pay the fees, which he described as a “skim off.” He asked for advice from Pederson about whether it would be safe to keep his will and financial documents in his room. She advised him to rent a safety deposit box, and in a subsequent letter Hadesbeck said that he had accepted her advice.

Pederson says that while her uncle spent as little as possible on himself, he was generous with family members, including her. “He would take you out to dinner, but he would not buy a fan for his room.” There is

documentation in his files showing that he provided money to his older brother Matthew in Texas, who fell on hard times during his old age. Hadesbeck also sent flowers and gifts to his eldest sibling, Susanna, who lived in Vancouver.

Hadesbeck always had a car or a truck and saw having a vehicle as central to his independence. “If I can’t drive anymore, I will be totally lost,” he wrote in one letter. On a Christmas that he spent alone, as was often the case, he talked about “going for a drive around the city for some fresh air.” On another occasion, when he returned from the West Coast, he drove his truck all the way to Regina without stopping. It was a thirty-two-hour trip, and he was seventy-four years old.

Hadesbeck did not find a stable housing arrangement for ten years after his wife died. In 1980, he became a resident at Pioneer Village, a sprawling Regina complex for seniors. He lived there for the rest of his life. We know something of his health and frame of mind during that time because, once again, he kept notes. In 1985, he wrote: “Depression is my only health problem. But why? I have a good home here at Pioneer Village, still drive my car, fairly good health at 80 plus, no money problems. So what is missing?”[11] He kept a record of various ailments, although they were not unusual for someone of his age. In 1985, he recorded that he weighed more than two hundred pounds on a frame of five feet, seven inches. His doctor told him to lose weight and not to eat salt. Hadesbeck also described having high blood pressure, sleep apnea, leg cramps, and muscle fatigue. Eventually, he became blind in one eye.[12]

Hadesbeck referred on several occasions in his notes to drinking alcohol, but he chose to employ irony, so it is difficult to know how much he consumed. In 1984, he wrote: “My doc also cut out my liquid cheer, no more booze except a short snort of rum for medicinal purposes when I can’t sleep too well or have a cold.” His niece Phyllis Pederson says that he drank only in moderation. He had been a lifelong smoker, but he gave that up in old age. There was little by way of complaint in his notes. Hadesbeck was philosophical about aging: “The body has slowed down, however with patience, acceptance, perseverance, gratitude and curiosity I can keep myself alert, active and intact. And my treasured independence? To date, but how much longer? Who knows?”

In the meantime, he had a chip on his shoulder and a writing project in mind.

CHAPTER 19

MEMOIRS

Frank Hadesbeck was a frustrated writer as well as being an RCMP informant. The two have something in common. Much like the old sailor in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Hadesbeck had a story that he wanted badly to tell. He planned to write a memoir, although on other occasions, he fantasized about writing his story as thinly disguised fiction. This was not a passing whim. While he was not well educated in any formal sense, he had always dreamed of being a writer. In one of his notes to himself, he said, "To write my memories and experiences as a special agent. Have it put in print in a book. Not just for the money, but to see and read my name in print." His much younger Communist Party comrade Ed Lehman noted the obsession: "Frank would have liked to be a writer. He mentioned it several times. He regretted that."[1]

Though Hadesbeck craved an audience, he did not know how to find one. He lacked the skill to compose his tale, and he had another problem. He feared the consequences of sharing his story. He had been warned by his Security Service handlers not to keep notes. Why did he feel driven to publish? Likely, he wanted to feel the same rush of excitement that made his recruitment as a paid informant attractive back in the 1940s. That clandestine life was far more thrilling than the life of a farm labourer or a mechanic in a machine shop. The secrets he possessed gave Hadesbeck a sense of power and self-esteem.

Throughout his long years working on ranches in the American outback and isolated farms in Alberta, Hadesbeck kept notes and files on stories that he might write, books he should read, words that interested him. Among his unprocessed papers at the Saskatchewan archives is a used envelope that bears the handwritten label “Stories and poems by Frank Hadesbeck.”[2]

One story, dated 1928, appears to be autobiographical. It describes how mice had invaded an old bunkhouse that the author was using while on a solo contract to repair fences on a ranch. The mice attracted a rattlesnake. Hadesbeck had encountered such a snake in his dark cabin and killed it when he returned from buying groceries in a distant town. He was at that time working on ranches in Wyoming. Another story describes how a group of men on a harvesting crew refused to sleep in an old house on a farm property because they heard it was inhabited by the ghost of a woman who once lived there.

There are rhyming poems written in 1934, when he was working as a sheep herder near Taber, Alberta. From 1940, there is a one-page list of books to read, created by an organization called the Economy Educational League in New York City. The titles include *Great Poems of the English Language*, *The Arabian Nights,* and *Experiment in Autobiography* by H. G. Wells. In 1954, when he was working for General Tractor in Regina, Hadesbeck created a story outline about a secret agent who was discovered by the Communist Party and marked for liquidation. The agent stalled for time by providing his captors with the names of people he had read about in the communist press, creating stories identifying them as informants. It is a story that bears at least some resemblance to Hadesbeck’s habit of keeping clippings and creating brief profiles of communists and non-party progressives for the RCMP.

He also kept a pink Hilroy exercise book, like those used by students of my generation for taking class notes in school. In Hadesbeck’s case, it is filled with words, beginning with *A*, as in “accomplice” and “acronym.” The list proceeds, letter by letter, through “coercion,” “conjecture,” and “creationism,” on to “parochial” and “pontificating,” to end on a page with “unpretentious” and “uxorial.”[3] You can imagine him scribbling those words onto pages while sitting in a rough bunkhouse at a ranch somewhere in Wyoming or Alberta.

Hadesbeck's writing project in retirement added spice to the existence of a solitary old man. He wrote in 1984: "Lonely I am not. Learned to enjoy my own company. An evening at home by myself is all that I need." Also: "This may be a lunatic's way of asking for help before I go to my reward."

Hadesbeck's writerly traits served him well in his years as an RCMP source. He had sharp powers of observation. He made notes and he kept them: "I had this bunch of notes with names and dates that I had tossed into a wooden cheese box. I held onto these notes thinking that perhaps one day I would put it all together in a story. That way I would get at least some recognition for the yeoman service my contacts always said I did for my country."

He was a good listener. With some pride, Hadesbeck told Al Dyck, the student whose job was to visit with older men, that he had a knack for getting people to confide in him.[4] Yet he was an outsider, as many writers are, on the margins, watching and recording events for potential use, even while participating in them. Hadesbeck kept his notes for years, decades in some cases: "Many of these reports done in lead pencil and almost not readable. That's why I had to do them over in my printing style. Names, dates, and places remain the same." He attempted to organize the material into a narrative, particularly as he became older and increasingly isolated. His files contain multiple handwritten drafts, sorted by chronology and theme.

One draft is titled "How I got the Special Agent job": "It all began many years ago in the town of Taber, Alberta." He had a category called "Notes of Special Interest," where he described how surveillance was carried out. He had a category for "Watch Out Lists," replete with the names of individuals and organizations the police had instructed him to follow. He had multiple pages under the title "Contacts," meaning his RCMP handlers, in which he provided names, dates, and brief details of some meetings between the early 1940s and the late 1970s.

He even had a section called "In Closing," where he attempted to sum up his experience and to draw meaning from his activities:

> This report will be my monument to remind readers that I once passed this way in the 20th century. I have no qualms about the work I did as a special agent. It takes an extremely strong and

> healthy person to do this kind of work for 30-odd years without taking on any guilt feelings or mental attitudes, deteriorating to almost anti-social existence. It can become very frustrating and lonely as the years go by, knowing that you can have no public recognition for what one believes he is doing for the best interest for home and country. It's certainly not for a family man.

Hadesbeck also sought to avenge what he considered to be shabby treatment. He believed that the RCMP had promised him a pension like any other member of the force. That did not happen: "Many times I had doubts and mixed feelings about some of the things I was being asked to do. I should have guessed that they were just using me all along when they just dismissed me without any retirement or severance pay. It was just the old verbal statement (never in writing) that I did good work, saved them hundreds of man hours. But my services were no longer needed." He had always wanted to belong, but never did: "My last contact told me that I was never one of them. Had I been told this by Inspector Darling in the early 1940s I would have turned the job down."

Despite his attempts to fit in, Hadesbeck always harboured a mistrust of the RCMP and his handlers. He was a survivor with a measure of cynicism about people and organizations. Those who lack power are often resentful. In Spain, Hadesbeck had a common man's grudge toward his commanding officers, not to mention the political commissars. Eventually, he felt a similar resentment toward the Security Service. He thought that holding on to his notes and threatening to publish would give him some leverage if ever he needed it: "So to provide for a rainy day I stacked away some dates, names and happenings as I went along. Just in case they dump me with empty pockets, that I would have a good, true story to lean on."

In the early years of his undercover work, Hadesbeck used criticism of the Security Service as a cover to protect against being suspect within the Communist Party. Later, he came to believe that the service was indeed corrupt and too powerful. He wanted to expose it. He expressed this both as a desire to inform citizens who needed to know and to warn anyone tempted to become an informant to avoid it.

Hadesbeck also claimed to be upset by the perks and petty corruption of some officers. At times, his comments were about things that he observed:

“Shortly before retirement they pick the place and transfer near there, thereby having the government foot the cost of moving and paying the real estate agents fees and cost difference in the house and property.” At other times, he participated in the game: “I refuse to allow my conscience to reject my shading my reports or padding my expense sheets, just to prolong my extra, tax-free income as long as possible, some 30-odd years as I count the time.”

The basics of his story are authentic. There is no doubt Hadesbeck was a paid informant on behalf of the Security Service. Much of the information he provided about his handlers can be tested against other sources. He provided details about their lives that he could not have known had he not been close to them. Information available through the RCMP Graves website, Ancestry.com, or access to information requests show officers living in Lethbridge, Calgary, and Regina at times when Hadesbeck reported having worked with them.

It was in describing his motives that Hadesbeck was an unreliable narrator. Anyone who reads autobiographies, particularly of public figures like politicians, business leaders, or athletes, will know they shape their stories to cast themselves in the best possible light. Hadesbeck attempted to do that as well. He described himself as someone who served his country by informing upon those who threatened it: “I still believed that I did the right thing. I was told many times by my contacts that I was doing a job that had to be done during a wartime situation.” Despite that self-description, Hadesbeck admitted in his conversations with Otto Driedger that he became an informant for the money.

On some occasions, contrasting descriptions of his self-interest and self-sacrifice appear on the same page: He wrote: “The joke really is on those who say I should never have took on this job, because I now have a nice stack of coin that is more than I need to care for me in my senior years.” But in the following paragraph, he was a patriot: “This writing is to tell the reader to remember one that thought he was serving his country during a wartime period of our history.”

Whatever his motives, Hadesbeck was confronted by the practical question of how to tell his story. He revised his material often, a necessity for any writer. Unfortunately for him, the succeeding drafts did not improve. They merely repeated themselves with minor variations. Despite

possessing sharp skills as an observer, he lacked the ability to organize his material and complete his narrative. It was impressive that he took it as far as he did. Hadesbeck had a disrupted and orphaned childhood. He attended school for only a few years. He described himself as dyslexic, which would have made writing more challenging. He experienced poverty and great uncertainty during the Depression. He had no realistic idea about how to publish or to reach an audience. Hadesbeck needed an editor and a literary guide. Eventually, he recognized those problems and tried to solve them.

In 1977, he contacted Nik Burton of Regina, executive director of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild. Burton said in an interview that Hadesbeck told him he was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and that he had kept a diary. He hoped that it could become a book. Burton was intrigued and visited Hadesbeck at his apartment in downtown Regina. When Burton later read the diary, he was disappointed. "It contained brief, almost daily entries," he told me, "but they were factual and dry. I decided there was really no story here. If there had been, I might have tried to match him up with one of our Writers' Guild members to help him."[5]

Burton said he asked Hadesbeck about his commitment to the Spanish cause. "He said that at the time he had no job and nothing to do in Canada and that at least over there they fed you." Hadesbeck made no mention of being a member of the Communist Party, and none of being a source for the RCMP. He wanted to tell a story, but he had suppressed its most intriguing aspects.

In 1978, Hadesbeck provided some of his papers to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan and was paid $150. His diary during the Spanish Civil War is the most interesting part of the collection, although the pages are so faded that they can barely be read. There are several letters, a couple of newspaper clippings, and a few photos. There are scattered artifacts: buttons, lapel pins, playing cards, and a cigarette lighter. Much of the material does not relate to Hadesbeck specifically, but consists instead of pamphlets and booklets about Spain during the war. There are also some news bulletins from the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Hadesbeck's Communist Party connections are clear, but there is nothing in the files to document, or even hint at, his decades of informing on behalf of the RCMP.[6]

Hadesbeck did come close to a public revelation through Sherv Shragge, the Regina journalist and broadcaster whose family were owners of General Tractor. By the late 1970s, Shragge had his own program on CBC Television and was planning coverage of the McDonald Commission that was investigating charges of RCMP wrongdoing.

The force was accused of routinely committing crimes in pursuing its counter-subversion activities. Those crimes included unauthorized mail openings, the widespread monitoring of electoral candidates, and hundreds of break-ins without warrants. In Quebec, RCMP officers burned down a barn southeast of Montreal to prevent a meeting involving the FLQ from taking place. In 1975, officers broke into the offices of the Parti Québécois to steal the party's membership lists. In that year, the PQ was the Official Opposition in the province's national assembly.[7]

In 1977, the Trudeau government appointed Justice McDonald to investigate. In August 1979, his commission was to hold a public hearing in Regina. Shragge thought about Hadesbeck and his long career as an informant and contacted him to propose an interview. It was to be broadcast on the day of McDonald's hearing. Hadesbeck's papers in my possession contain a note on CBC letterhead from Shragge. It has a draft introduction to be used for the interview, and a proposed set of questions. Hadesbeck jotted the figure $500 on the page, and in a later interview with Otto Driedger he said that the CBC promised to pay him. That amount would be worth about $2,000 in today's currency.[8]

CBC journalist Sherv Shragge planned to interview Frank Hadesbeck on television in 1979, but it fell through. Courtesy Sherv Shragge.

Shragge promised to call him Mr. Benedict and to disguise his appearance. “Here is a list of general questions I would ask you to amplify on,” Shragge wrote in his note. How had Hadesbeck been recruited by the RCMP? How many years did he serve? What was the nature of his work? Whom was he asked to spy on? What it was like to be undercover? How much had he been paid? Did he receive a pension? Shragge also raised the question of the RCMP’s misdemeanours and asked Hadesbeck if he thought Canada was becoming a police state.

In a draft introduction written for the interview, Shragge said that for security reasons he could not disclose the specific nature of information that Mr. Benedict had provided to his handlers. Rather he proposed to provide a "case history the commissioners might never hear." He talked in general terms about Hadesbeck's work: his providing intelligence about the Communist Party, handing over party membership and mailing lists, and intercepting mail from the post office. Shragge mentioned that Hadesbeck would meet with handlers in hotel rooms. He placed his monthly income at between $150 and $400 per month, equivalent to between $500 and $1,400 in current dollars.

Shragge's introduction followed the storyline Hadesbeck was using in his memoir drafts. Shragge described how Hadesbeck was recruited after the Spanish Civil War and the lonely life he lived as a paid informant. He accepted Hadesbeck's claim about wanting to volunteer for the military during the Second World War. He said that Hadesbeck relented after drawing "the wrath of the RCMP," who told him that he was more useful as a source than a soldier. Shragge recounted how, despite promises made by RCMP officers that he would receive a pension, Hadesbeck was given a modest cash payment and told to keep quiet.

The interview would have created a stir on the day that Justice McDonald held his hearing in Regina, but Hadesbeck backed out. "We did not conduct the interview," Shragge told me. "He shrank away." Hadesbeck may have had a residual loyalty to the RCMP despite his bitterness toward them. He was also afraid. He was aware that only a few special agents had ever come forward to publicize their careers as informants, and usually it did not end happily for them.

One of those people was Patrick Walsh, who claimed that he had been an unpaid informant in the 1930s and 1940s, and later a secret agent for the RCMP between 1949 and 1953. Like Hadesbeck, Walsh said he had a badge number, which he described as 208-A. Walsh claimed that he had infiltrated the Communist Party and other related organizations, including the Canadian Peace Congress and the USSR-Canada Friendship Association.[9]

Walsh later became an embarrassment to the RCMP due to his involvement in an organization called the Canadian Intelligence Service, a radical fringe group that was antisemitic and virulently anti-communist. Walsh claimed to have helped the House Un-American Activities Committee in the US as the committee harassed Canadian diplomat Herbert Norman, accusing him of being a communist. The harassment became so pernicious that Norman, who was Canada's ambassador to Egypt, jumped to his death from a high-rise building in Cairo in 1956. Walsh also claimed that Tommy Douglas, Paul Martin Sr., Lester Pearson, Pierre Trudeau, and various other politicians were communists.[10] The RCMP has refused to confirm or deny whether Walsh was ever a source.[11]

Another civilian source was an Ottawa man named Calvin MacDonald, who infiltrated the Communist Party for ten years before he was uncovered. MacDonald later claimed in an interview with the CBC that after he was outed the RCMP disowned him. He said that he could not find work because he was known as a member of the party, and that the RCMP refused to clear his name. He claimed, as well, that the pressure placed upon his family after he was discovered had shattered his marriage and estranged him from his children. After a spate of interviews in the 1960s, MacDonald faded away and was seldom heard from again.[12]

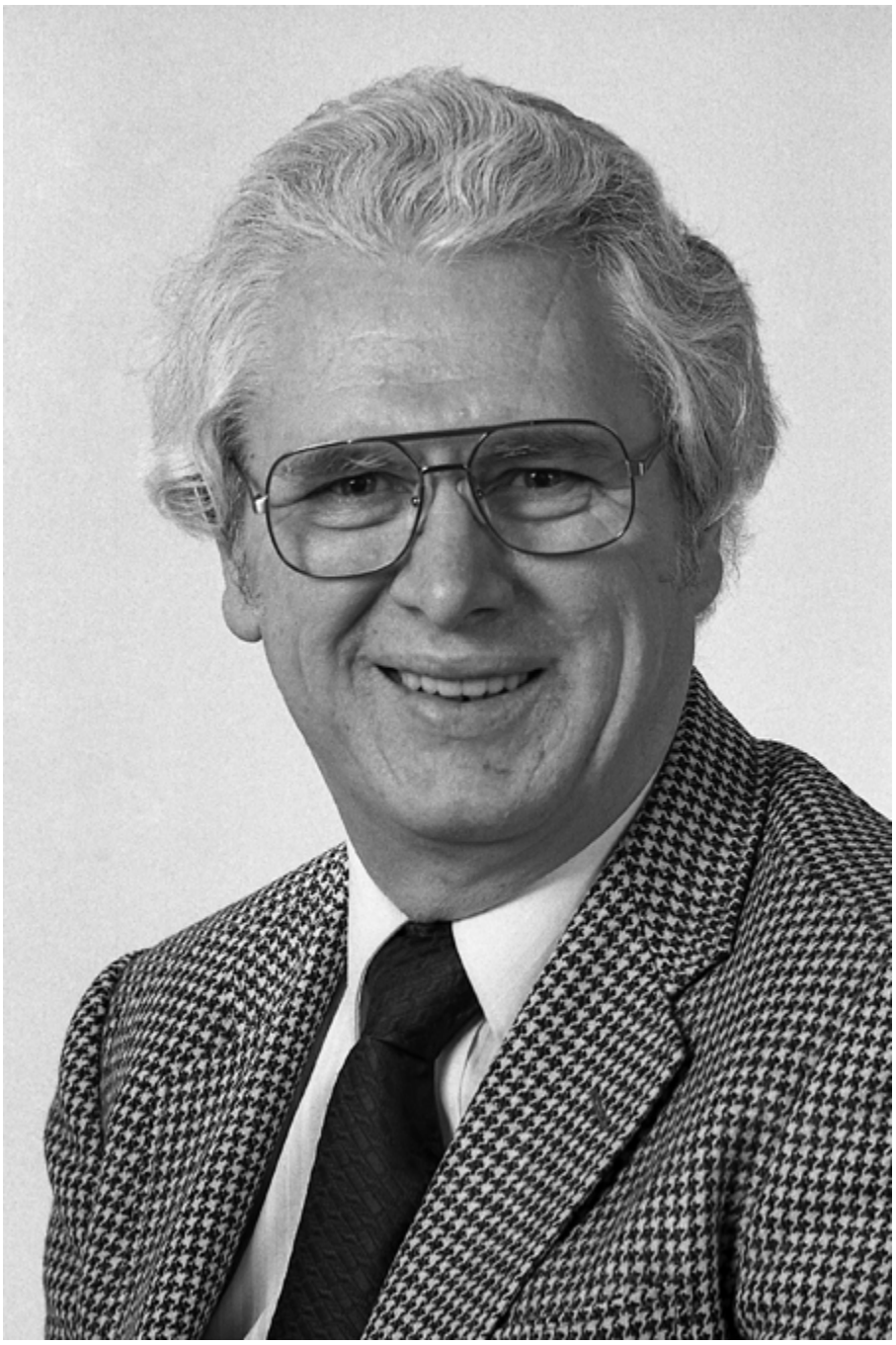
An informant named Robert Gosden had been recruited years earlier by the RNWMP in January 1919 to provide information on the labour movement in British Columbia and Alberta. His career as an informant carrying badge number 10 lasted only a few months. When Gosden attended the Western Labour Conference in Calgary in March 1919, he was publicly denounced as a police spy. He soon disappeared from public life and became immersed in the occult, theosophy, and mystic religions.[13]

Hadesbeck continued with his jottings throughout the 1980s. Then he encountered Otto Driedger, who appeared interested in the story. They met several times. Driedger's recall of those events is supported by two audio recordings during meetings in November and December 1987. These were not typical journalistic question-and-answer interviews, but rather recorded discussions interspersed with the sounds of paper shuffling. The two men were identifying material in Hadesbeck's files that Driedger would take

away and photocopy for his research. There were other meetings that Driedger did not record but did make notes on.[14]

Hadesbeck wanted to have a book written about his life as a source for the RCMP, or as he liked to describe it, a “secret agent.” Driedger said it would take time, but Hadesbeck was impatient. “I want it as soon as possible,” he said on tape. “You never know what is going to happen. I would kind of like to read it myself before I pass on.” Driedger replied, “We will have to work at it.” Hadesbeck said, “So if you pick my brains and I remember and you put it in there, it will make a hell of a story.”

As a result of their meetings, Driedger took hundreds of pages of material with him. Hadesbeck wanted it back, so Driedger made photocopies and returned the originals. Hadesbeck said that he would leave instructions to have all his papers incinerated after he died. He did not say who would perform that task for him, and Driedger does not know what happened to the original material.



Otto Driedger planned to write about Frank Hadesbeck, but decided against it. University of Regina Photography Department.

Driedger at first appeared keen on writing a book, but he changed his mind. He told me in an interview: “My view was that publishing the information would not be advisable because of the implications for the RCMP. I had some discussions about this with others, and my hesitation was confirmed.” I asked Driedger if he had sought legal advice. He had not.

He spoke to Superintendent William MacRae, a senior RCMP officer who was for many years a training officer for cadets at the RCMP depot in Regina. Driedger knew him socially. MacRae advised him that, if he were to write about Hadesbeck, he should disguise it as fiction. “I did not do that kind of writing,” Driedger added. “So I decided against it.”

While Driedger did not write the book, he did engage in some social work on Hadesbeck’s behalf related to his older brother Matthew. By the 1980s Matthew Hadesbeck was widowed and living in poverty in Texas. Hadesbeck was concerned about him and sent money. He received a letter in October 1987 from the Texas Department of Human Services in Laredo. The author said that Matthew was on social assistance and that he had financial, medical, and other problems that had to be addressed. The official suggested that Hadesbeck travel to Texas to help his brother with his needs and future planning.

Driedger spoke with the official on the telephone and later sent him a letter on Hadesbeck’s behalf. Hadesbeck maintained a joint bank account with Matthew, but he was concerned that a female friend and her family might be taking advantage of him. Driedger wrote that Hadesbeck was not healthy enough to travel to Texas. Driedger supplied the names of some relatives in the US who might assist. Matthew died in Texas in 1990. By that time all of Frank Hadesbeck’s other siblings were dead as well.[15]

Driedger did not, however, write a book. Hadesbeck’s dream of seeing his name in print was not to be. He was, like the ancient mariner, obsessed with his story, but when he had a chance in 1979 to tell at least part of it on television, Hadesbeck shrank from the opportunity. When he was finally prepared to tell all, Otto Driedger considered the project but decided against it. Driedger was apprehensive about offending the RCMP. Decades later, I am less concerned about that.

CHAPTER 20

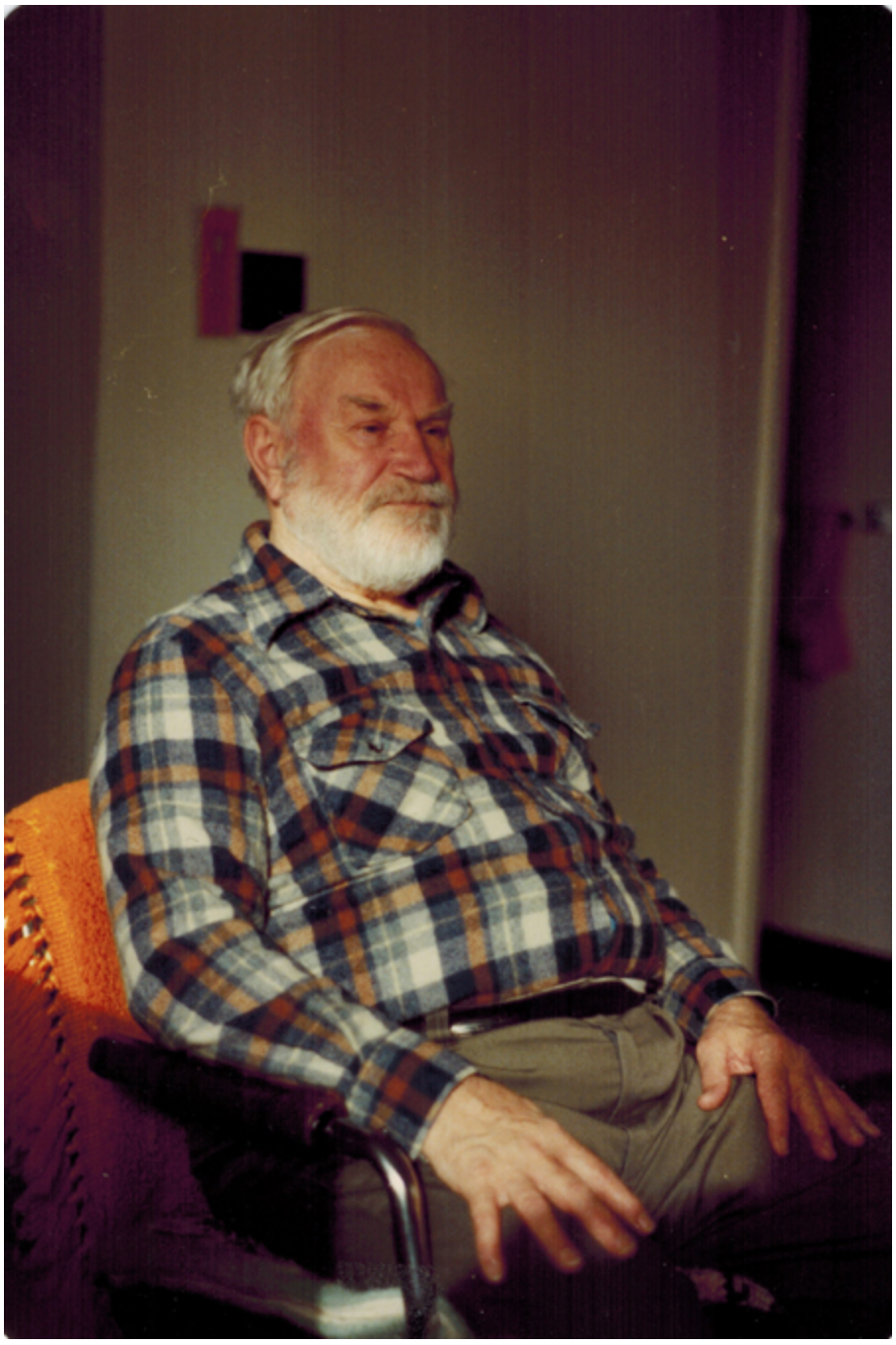
A DOUBLE LIFE

Frank Hadesbeck lived for almost twenty years after his encounters with Otto Driedger. He spent that entire time at Pioneer Village. Al Dyck, the young man who introduced Driedger to Hadesbeck in the 1980s, remembers him well. “I visited him in his suite over the course of five or six months,” Dyck told me. “He was quite blind, or at least had trouble seeing, likely because of cataracts, but I always thought he was one of my highest-functioning clients. Some of the other guys were in bad shape. He was a person of some means. The place was always clean and neat, and well appointed. He had several chairs, a TV, a radio, and his bedroom was always made up and neat. He was well groomed.” Dyck said that Hadesbeck was at first cautious and suspicious of his presence. “He was reserved, and he was coy at times. It took him a while, but then he opened up.”[1]

Driedger also remembers Hadesbeck. “He was quite a character. There are not many who spend such a long time as informers. He seemed to have strong nerves in being able to live this double life for a long time without it being found out or quitting the arrangement. I expect there was also an element of adventure and excitement. I did not get the impression that loyalty to the country was part of his perspective.”[2]

Hadesbeck was lonely in retirement, and he admitted as much to Driedger. “It was hard to have friends,” Hadesbeck said, “because there were so many things in my life that I could not share. This meant that we

had friends on a more superficial level. Because of the double life I led, retirement is a lonely period." That was consistent with Al Dyck's recollection: "I do not remember him interacting with anyone. I do not remember him referencing his family or relatives. I never saw any pictures of friends or relatives that I can recall." Dyck's student job ended with his university graduation, and he soon left Regina to take a job in British Columbia. He never saw Hadesbeck again.



An elderly Frank Hadesbeck at Pioneer Village, Regina, circa 1987. Courtesy Al Dyck.

Hadesbeck had little contact with his former RCMP handlers, apart from Ivor Jenkins. Most had been reassigned or had retired. Security Service officers were instructed not to continue in their relationships with former sources. Hadesbeck had hoped for more, but the connections were largely work related. When the exchange of money for information ended,

the relationships, with a few exceptions, ended as well. He came to understand that, and it made him bitter. Dyck recalled: “He did not talk about the RCMP with pride. He was unhappy. He felt coerced. He felt used. He had received no pension.”

Nor did he maintain friendships with his former comrades in the Communist Party. There were hard feelings going both ways. In October 1984, members of Mackenzie-Papineau veterans’ group organized a two-day event at the University of Regina. The Mac-Paps held reunions occasionally, and after the death of General Franco in 1975 some of the old soldiers visited Spain, where they were feted. The Mac-Paps lobbied the Canadian government for recognition like that offered to veterans of the First and Second World Wars and Korea. The RCMP, which continued to maintain surveillance on the aging fighters even decades after their service, was opposed to such recognition. It was never granted.

Although Hadesbeck had fought with Dimitrov Battalion in Spain, he joined the Mac-Pap veterans’ group in Canada after the war and remained a member into the mid-1970s, but he dropped the affiliation when he left the Communist Party. Prior to the 1984 event in Regina, which he did not attend, a reporter from the *Leader-Post* in Regina did separate interviews with Hadesbeck and William Beeching about their experiences in Spain. The reporter quoted extensively from Hadesbeck’s war diary housed at the Saskatchewan archives. Hadesbeck had written that among the foreign volunteers in Spain, 10 percent were honest revolutionaries, while 30 percent were fools and 60 percent were opportunists.[3] The story appeared on October 13, 1984.

That brought a sharp rebuke from William Kardash of Winnipeg, a veteran who had lost a leg in the war. In a letter published in the *Leader-Post* on October 31, he challenged Hadesbeck on how he had arrived at those numbers. Kardash wrote: “That percentage classification is an insult not only to Canadian volunteers but to all international brigades and all the heroic Spanish people who fought against fascism.” He also noted that Hadesbeck had not been injured in the war.[4]

Hadesbeck contacted William Beeching and demanded that Kardash publish a retraction in the newspaper, threatening to sue if he did not.[5] Beeching wrote to Kardash expressing his concern that if Hadesbeck sued it would be embarrassing for the Mac-Pap veterans. He ended by providing

the coordinates for George Taylor, their former Spanish war comrade and, later, senior lawyer in Saskatoon.[6] Kardash contacted Taylor, who told him not to worry. “Your letter published by the *Leader-Post* is not derogatory of Frank Hadesbeck. I would be most surprised if any lawyer thought that it was.”[7]

Hadesbeck eventually drafted a two-page private response to Kardash. He said that the letter in the newspaper had caused him distress. He asked Kardash why he had not contacted him directly rather than going public. Hadesbeck said that some comments attributed to him in the article had appeared in ways that he did not intend. That self-justification, though, is not convincing because the reporter was quoting directly from Hadesbeck’s Spanish Civil War diary.[8]

In his response to Hadesbeck later in January, Kardash chose to be diplomatic. He addressed him as Comrade Hadesbeck. He said that in his letter to the newspaper he was mainly responding to Hadesbeck’s description of the volunteers to Spain, and he did not wish to disparage Hadesbeck’s effort in the war. As for Hadesbeck not being injured, Kardash said that in his letter he was merely paraphrasing what the newspaper reporter had written, but “as this has caused you much emotional distress, I am sorry that this has happened and sincerely apologize.”[9]

When he talked to Driedger on tape several years later, Hadesbeck was still upset. “They are all against me because of that article,” he said. “They won’t talk to me. They won’t phone me anymore.”[10] There was, at one level, a pathos in having elderly war veterans squabbling so many years after the event, but the episode also spoke to Hadesbeck’s isolation.

Hadesbeck was not an anti-fascist, a communist, or even a socialist, as were most others who volunteered to go to Spain, but he was a good soldier and he sympathized with innocent people who were being bombed and strafed by German and Italian fascists. Hadesbeck was among those eventually recognized for his service. In 2001 Governor General Adrienne Clarkson presided at a ceremony in Ottawa to dedicate a monument honouring the Canadians who went to Spain to fight on the Republican side. The location, near the spot where the Rideau River tumbles into the Ottawa River, is scenic. The monument consists of a low-rise marble wall that has fifty-two panels with the names of the 1,546 Canadian volunteers engraved in it. An accompanying metal sculpture depicts the mythological

Prometheus with his hand raised to the sun. Hadesbeck's name is there along with the others, although it is misspelled.[11]

Spain was Hadesbeck's finest hour, but upon his return, he agreed to inform upon people who believed him to be a comrade and an ally. He lived a double life, deceiving the people around him. He was isolated by choice, and that isolation only intensified as he aged.

Monument in Ottawa for Mackenzie-Papineau veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Dennis Gruending photo.

In his 1987 interviews with Driedger, Hadesbeck was also apprehensive about the publication of a book that Beeching was writing about the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Beeching was conducting interviews and

had written to Hadesbeck asking him to participate. He'd ignored the invitation and told Driedger that he was suspicious: "I'm just wondering what Beeching is writing about me. But he won't talk to me anymore and I don't give a damn anyways."

Hadesbeck need not have worried. Beeching did write a book called *Canadian Volunteers: Spain, 1936–39.* Rather than interviewing Hadesbeck, he consulted Hadesbeck's diary in the archives and quoted selectively from it. He was respectful toward Hadesbeck and made no criticism of him. Beeching died at age seventy-six in 1990, shortly after completing his book.

Hadesbeck had always dreaded going into a home but appeared relieved when in 1980 he was accepted into Pioneer Village. It was there that Al Dyck encountered him in 1987–88. In the early 1990s, a young man named Mark McGeough began to volunteer at the home as a requirement for a social work class. McGeough was a farmer from Govan, north of Regina, and was also studying at the university. He continued to see Hadesbeck over a period of years, long after he left the university. "He was an interesting guy," McGeough says. "He loved to talk. He was not very well educated, but he taught himself everything. He was a good writer." McGeough says that Hadesbeck liked to reminisce about his years as a child on a farm near Aylesbury. He told McGeough about his time in the US army, and his desertion. He also told him about his work as an RCMP informant. "He had papers in his room. I saw some of them," McGeough recalls.

Initially Hadesbeck was lucid, although McGeough says that he slept a lot and would have to be awakened for visits. But in the following years, age and loss of function took their toll as Hadesbeck's treasured independence gave way to dementia. In November 1993, Phyllis Pederson received a letter from the justice department in Saskatchewan. The trust officer told her that on the advice of medical authorities Hadesbeck was certified as incompetent to handle his estate. The officer said her office could take on the job, and that is what happened.[12]

Pederson and her husband would travel to Regina from BC each year to visit Hadesbeck. "His biggest fear was always that he would end up with dementia and lose his independence," she says. "In 2005, he didn't know

who he was or who anyone else was." In the following year, he died on May 24, just a week after his one hundredth birthday.

A brief obituary appeared in the *Leader-Post* where Hadesbeck was described as a loving husband and a caring uncle. He was "a staunch supporter of social issues" and had served in Spain. There was no mention of his being a member of the Communist Party, and none of his being an informant for the RCMP.

In an undated handwritten note regarding the end of life and his estate, Hadesbeck requested that there be no funeral, and that he wanted to be buried in a simple pine box.[13] Pederson chose to ignore that request. There was a coffin and a small funeral. It was attended by only six people: Pederson and her husband Don, a Regina couple who were their friends, Mark McGeough, and a woman bearing the family name who thought she might be Hadesbeck's cousin but did not know him.

Despite the profusion of certificates, cash, and papers in his room, Hadesbeck's affairs were in order. The instructions in a note written by Hadesbeck had been codified in a will prepared in 1976 by Regina lawyer Ronald Shirkey, who was named as the state's executor. Despite Hadesbeck's threats in his letters to his niece, saying that he would sever the relationship with Shirkey, it appears he did not do so. He left an estate valued at $366,000, which in 2023 currency would value $530,000. That is a substantial amount for someone who had only three years of schooling and had spent much of his working life as a farm and ranch hand. Of course, he'd also had an undeclared and untaxed income as an RCMP informant. Three of the five beneficiaries named in his will, including his brother Matthew, had predeceased him. The two remaining beneficiaries were nieces, Phyllis Pederson and Anne Moxon, on his wife Bernadette's side of the family.[14]

Mark McGeough, who had continued to visit Hadesbeck, said that in his last years Hadesbeck often thought he was back on the farm in Aylesbury, although almost a century had passed since that time. McGeough says there was unease at Pioneer Village about what Hadesbeck kept in his room, including investment certificates, wads of cash in his pockets, and his jumble of papers. "There were a lot of names on those papers and some

concern about what would happen if they got out." McGeough believes that a social worker, now deceased, at Pioneer Village, examined the papers, but McGeough does not know what became of them. Phyllis Pederson recalls that "someone went all through Uncle Frank's papers," but she does not know who it was. On a subsequent visit to Pioneer Village, she collected what remained, some photos and papers of interest to the family. She took them back with her to BC and later shared much of that material with her cousins.

We do not know what happened to the rest of Hadesbeck's papers. Otto Driedger had taken photocopies, but he'd returned the originals. Hadesbeck donated some papers to the Saskatchewan archives in 1978. The archives sorted the material into two boxes and created a finding aid. The donated papers contained no information about Hadesbeck's being a paid informant for the Security Service.

When I visited the archives to do research, I was surprised to find nine additional boxes of papers waiting for me on a trolley. They had never been processed. The archivist who assisted me said the boxes contained newspaper clippings. They do contain old clippings, but stuffed into bulging envelopes that Hadesbeck had recycled, there are also papers containing details about his time in the Communist Party in Calgary and Regina, his family history, samples of his writing, his ideas for stories, and much more, including about his life as a paid informant. The material also includes three audio cassettes, each an hour long, in which a young man reads aloud Hadesbeck's entire Spanish Civil War diary. The reader is not identified.

I asked an archivist when Hadesbeck had donated the unprocessed papers. I was told that it was not Hadesbeck, but rather that they had been provided in 1993 by Dr. John Archer, a much-revered historian and public intellectual in Saskatchewan. Archer served as Saskatchewan's legislative librarian, as the provincial archivist, and later as president of the University of Regina. He also wrote the officially recognized history of the province, which he prepared for its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1980. I asked the archivist if among Archer's voluminous papers at the archives there was any reference to Hadesbeck or correspondence with him. He checked and replied that no such documentation exists in the files. He said that Archer had a habit of locating papers from individuals and steering them to the archives in an informal way.

We do not know how Archer encountered Hadesbeck, or if he did at all. He provided the papers in 1993, the same year in which Hadesbeck was described as not competent to manage his estate. Was Hadesbeck at that time capable of reaching out to Archer about his papers, or did someone else alert Archer to them? It is conceivable that, as a former librarian and provincial archivist, Archer would have wanted the papers preserved rather than destroyed, and so handed them over. But these papers do not contain Hadesbeck's Watch Out lists or his pages describing his RCMP contacts and details of his meetings with them, material that Driedger had copied and eventually provided to me. Those original documents went missing.

Nor do the papers at the archives contain the approximately two thousand pages describing in brief various members of the Communist Party and progressives who were not necessarily party members. This material was among the many pages taken away by Driedger after he met Hadesbeck in late 1987. Driedger copied the originals and returned them. Although I now have those photocopies, the originals are nowhere to be found.

Frank Hadesbeck was a complex and compelling figure. I do not admire his treachery, but I acknowledge his difficult life and his innate intelligence. I am struck by the harsh conditions that he and his family had to endure. Hadesbeck had a traumatic childhood that helped to explain his focus on financial security. But a lot of other people, particularly those who served with him in Spain, had equally difficult lives too, and they did not sell out. He did.

By any conventional definition, Hadesbeck routinely betrayed William Beeching and others. It is easy to see Hadesbeck as deceitful, cynical, and self-serving. He did not become an informant for ideological reasons or as an act of patriotism. He did it for the money and perhaps a sense of power and excitement. It is tempting to see his comrade Beeching as a foil. Beeching was firm in his commitments and remained a Communist Party stalwart for decades. The same can be said for people like Ben Swankey and Pat Lenihan.

The economic disaster of the 1930s eroded faith in the capitalist system, just as growing inequality and the excess of elites erodes it today. The crisis

in people's lives generated a search for alternatives. One alternative was communism, with its class analysis to explain what was happening and its promise to create a better world. As a political philosophy, Marxism fundamentally changed the way in which the world is understood. Whenever we talk about the inflated compensation of CEOs, the minimum wage, a glass ceiling for women in the workplace, or the oppression of racialized groups of people, we are borrowing from the class analysis introduced by Marx and further developed by others. Prior to Marx, the world's functioning was described in various other ways, including the truculence of the gods, the divine right of kings, and free market liberalism.

In practice, the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe, where Marxism was applied, delivered police states rather than the utopia the revolution had promised. We might ask about the wisdom of Beeching's enduring loyalty to that tarnished ideal. He and other party members in Canada were for decades loath to believe any bad news about the Soviet Union and were quick to describe it as anti-communist disinformation. But the Communist Party of Canada paid a price in lost credibility and relevance for hewing so faithfully to the directives of the Comintern.

Some members left when the party decided to follow Moscow's orders to oppose Canada's participation in the war against Germany in 1939. Others left after the death of Stalin. In a closed-door meeting in 1956, his successor Nikita Khrushchev revealed that Stalin had engaged in a ruthless and paranoid campaign of show trials, executions, and banishment to Siberian labour camps. Millions of his own people were murdered on Stalin's orders. Many in the Soviet Union must have known something of these events, even though the news was suppressed. Communists in other countries either did not know or refused to believe what they were hearing. Following Khrushchev's speech, the news was widely publicized. Even more members left the party after the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, both launched against countries with communist governments.

Beeching and a dwindling number of others carried on. He continued to lead the Saskatchewan party for years. A scan of federal elections between 1945 and 1965 shows him running five times, never attracting more than a few hundred votes. He was also a candidate in provincial and civic elections, with similar results. It was a hopeless cause, but Beeching

soldiered on. Others left. He doubled down. Was that admirable or was it a lack of courage and imagination?

It may be easier to understand that stubborn adherence if people in the West were to look in the mirror. In 1956, Great Britain and France, aided by Israel, unleashed a war on Egypt after it nationalized the Suez Canal, which ran through its territory. It was a cynical and violent attempt by the colonial powers to maintain their waning influence. That did not cause most French and British citizens, or Israelis, to give up on their countries or their political parties.

The US has engaged in multiple wars, invasion, coups, and assassinations in the Philippines, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Vietnam, Chile, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. That did not lead most Americans, Democrat or Republican, to give up on their political system or their preferred party. Soviet communism failed as a system and its adherents were reluctant or unable to admit it. But unregulated capitalism is rooted in human and environmental exploitation that threatens to lead us over a cliff. Market fundamentalists continue to deny this reality.

None of the big questions about ideology or behaviour of the state preoccupied Hadesbeck. In the notes that he left, there is barely a mention about Stalin, Hungary, or even the Cold War. Those were problems for the Communist Party, and even though he professed his allegiance for decades, he was not one of them. Hadesbeck was not an idealist or an intellectual. He was an informant and he had to watch his tongue. It is difficult to imagine how he could play his role convincingly for so long, but he did. Beeching's unwavering support for communism was a lost cause, but it engaged him and embedded him in a community, albeit one on the political fringe. Hadesbeck's spying was a meal ticket, and in his last, long years it left him isolated and bitter about the Security Service that had employed but never embraced him.

CHAPTER 21

SUPPRESSING DISSENT

Frank Hadesbeck's career as an informant was abnormally long, but it ended in the late 1970s. By the time he died thirty years later, much had changed. The Berlin Wall had fallen and the Soviet Union was dissolved, depriving the Security Service of its communist adversary and much of its vaunted reason for being. The days of steaming open intercepted envelopes had largely been replaced by high-tech digital and social media surveillance, but much about the RCMP's core approach has remained unchanged. From their earliest days, the NWMP and later the RCMP were used to defend the economic and political status quo, favouring the establishment insiders and treating outsiders as targets for surveillance and disruption.

The force always had a multi-purpose mandate. It was involved in criminal investigation and is best known for that role. When I was a child, there was a popular motto about the Mounties always getting their man. But from the beginning in 1873, the NWMP was used to force Indigenous Peoples onto reserves and to ensure they stayed there, to remove children from their homes and deliver them to Indian residential schools, and to enforce laws that outlawed Indigenous ceremonies. It was called upon to act as a military force, assisting the Canadian militia to defeat the Métis and Cree during the 1885 North-West Resistance.

During the First World War, the force rounded up “aliens” who were interned because their countries of origin were at war with Great Britain, and for that reason with Canada. In labour disputes, there was never a question about whose side the police were on. During construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Mounties were used to quash protests over dangerous working conditions, poor food, and bad accommodation. They were called upon to break strikes by coal miners in Lethbridge, Blairmore, Estevan, and elsewhere. They were used against workers in 1919 to put down the Winnipeg General Strike.

During the Great Depression people suffered desperately and searched for political alternatives to a system that had failed them. The RCMP, seeing that as a threat to Canada, conducted widespread surveillance. During the Second World War, the RCMP was deeply involved as the government dramatically expanded surveillance in the name of wartime security. The force remained more concerned with communists than with fascists, even when Canada was at war with the Nazis. It was in the early days of the war that Hadesbeck was recruited as an informant by officer Herbert Darling. After the war, anti-communism efforts went into overdrive during the Cold War, and the surveillance state became a permanent fixture in Canada.

It was at this time that operation PROFUNC laid plans for the arrest and internment of communist leaders and others should there be a war with the Soviets, or even a lesser crisis as defined by the government. The RCMP was central in creating the internment lists and kept them ready to use. It also participated in a shameful campaign to identify and fire homosexuals in the civil service and government agencies.

Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby write: “Anti-Communism was official public policy, pronounced and implemented by the government of Canada. The officers of the RCMP Security Service were tools for that policy: willing, enthusiastic, and, on the whole, reasonably effective.”[1] The Security Service file on Hadesbeck’s fellow party member William Beeching housed at Library and Archives Canada runs to six thousand pages. Many of his comrades received similar attention.

The surveillance, as we have seen from Hadesbeck’s Watch Out lists, extended well beyond the dwindling Communist Party to include a wide variety of progressive people. In 1962, the Security Service warned in a

secret report that people organizing community clinics in Saskatchewan during the doctors' strike were capable of violent acts. In the 1970s, the Security Service issued the same warning about left-wing activists in the Waffle movement, along with Howard Adams and other Indigenous activists. No one was promoting such violence, but it was a way for the RCMP to justify massive surveillance, planned disruption, and increased budgets for policing.

Today, the RCMP continues its old role in new guises. It shares the task with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, which was created in 1984 as a civilian-led agency whose main task is to gather information on foreign and domestic threats. The Cold War focus on the Soviet bloc and communists within Canada began to shift, in the 1990s, to a variety of other countries and to non-state actors. This became especially so after the al-Qaida attacks on the US on September 11, 2001, which claimed three thousand lives. Americans were stunned and their government responded by declaring an indeterminate "war on terror," which led to violent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a myriad of other lesser engagements.

In Canada, there began a zealous hunt for terrorists, with disastrous consequences for various Muslim Canadians. The highest-profile case was that of Maher Arar, a computer engineer who was born in Syria and emigrated to Canada. He was detained at a New York airport in 2002 travelling on his Canadian passport on the way home from a family vacation. The RCMP, which had been watching him, informed the Americans that Arar was a Muslim extremist, despite having no basis for describing him in that way. The Americans sent him to Syria, where he was imprisoned for almost a year and tortured.

Arar was returned to Canada after a public campaign led by his wife, Monia Mazigh, and assisted by Amnesty International and other civil society groups. A judicial inquiry reporting in 2005 found that Arar had no links to terrorism and that the RCMP was complicit in his rendition to Syria. The police apologized to Arar in 2006, as did the Canadian government in 2007. The government paid him $10.5 million in compensation.[2]

By the early 2000s, Canada's Liberal government was developing new security protocols in keeping with the shift away from a Cold War mentality toward individuals and non-state groups that it considered to be extremist threats. Ottawa released a national security strategy in 2004. The government developed a concept known as Critical Infrastructure Protection to protect public assets like airports and private ones such as pipelines.

The RCMP and CSIS, along with various departments and agencies, began to meet regularly with "stakeholders," which included companies such as Enbridge, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, an industry association. Their corporate personnel were granted security clearance to receive classified briefings and became partners in sharing information on surveillance and discussing tactics to stymie those opposed to extraction projects. Authors Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby describe the arrangement as a "petro-security apparatus" and a "surveillance web" intended to suppress dissent.[3]

Indigenous land defenders and their allies in the environmental movement have replaced communists as the objects of surveillance. They have been routinely described by the RCMP, CSIS, and other state agencies as potential terrorists. This ignores the fact that in Canada, civil society groups have a long history of non-violent engagement.

The Canadian petroleum industry is centred, although not exclusively, in Alberta and increasingly in the oilsands, but many of the companies are foreign-owned multinationals. These companies argue that the world needs Canadian energy and that development projects must proceed in the interest of national prosperity. Their proposals include a cobweb of pipelines that would move bitumen, conventional oil, and natural gas from Alberta and Saskatchewan to refineries within Canada and to ports for shipping by tanker to offshore markets.

The RCMP took the lead in the surveillance of activists and the quashing of protests on numerous resource projects. These included Enbridge's Northern Gateway proposal for a twin pipeline transporting diluted bitumen from the Athabasca oilsands to Kitimat, British Columbia, where it would be loaded onto oil tankers destined for Asian markets. Another project by Texas-based Kinder Morgan planned to double-track the existing Trans Mountain pipeline to carry bitumen, crude, and refined

products from Edmonton to the southern coast of British Columbia, then for transport by oil tanker. The TransCanada Corporation proposed an Energy East pipeline, which would send bitumen from the oilsands in Alberta and Saskatchewan to an export terminal in Saint John, New Brunswick. Several projects involved hydraulic fracking to extract natural gas from shale in Alberta, northern British Columbia, and New Brunswick.

In 2010, the National Energy Board was preparing to conduct a review and to hold public hearings into the Northern Gateway proposal. Even before those hearings began, the RCMP convened a meeting in Ottawa with several of its provincial detachments, CSIS, and Enbridge. The purpose was, in the RCMP's words, "to provide a forum to discuss security concerns" and "develop an integrated intelligence production plan." The letter of invitation described "potential criminal threats to the project." The threats were said to be "associated to Aboriginal sovereignty concerns, environmental extremists, and lone wolves."[4] In this case, a pipeline that was only in its proposal stage, prior to public hearings, had already fallen under the rubric of critical infrastructure.

Members of the Wet'suwet'en Nation created a settlement camp in the BC Interior to prevent industry representatives from surveying their territory. The Wet'suwet'en said they had never ceded or surrendered their land. The RCMP's E Division in BC began to produce a monthly *Aboriginal Issues Bulletin* to track opposition to the pipeline. The *Bulletin* was an effort reminiscent of the *RCMP Security Bulletins* produced a century earlier to monitor the activities of communists and progressives.[5]

That project was only one of several flashpoints. Another occurred in New Brunswick. In 2013, the Elsipogtog Mi'kmaq First Nation opposed seismic testing for shale gas by a Canadian subsidiary of Texas-based Southwestern Energy Company. The local people feared that if hydraulic fracking were to proceed, it would contaminate their land and water.

When the crews persisted, they were met with blockades. The RCMP responded by sending in hundreds of officers in camouflage with sniper rifles and dogs to arrest forty people, including the Elsipogtog First Nation's chief and a number of its council members. The police coordinated intelligence and surveillance activities with the Government of New Brunswick, Southwestern Energy, and the Irving corporations, who were also involved in the projects. The Irvings are one of the wealthiest families

in Canada. They have extensive logging operations in New Brunswick, an oil refinery in Saint John, hundreds of service stations throughout Eastern Canada and the New England states, and a shipyard in Halifax. The Irvings also owned New Brunswick's three daily newspapers, but sold them to Postmedia network in 2022.

Elsewhere, at Muskrat Falls, Labrador, a provincial Crown corporation decided to build a multi-billion-dollar hydroelectric dam that would flood Indigenous lands. Local Inuit and Innu people and their organizations were concerned about the risk of contamination from methylmercury in their downstream communities and hunting grounds. They blocked an entry to the construction site, and in May 2016, the RCMP moved in to arrest twenty-eight people. A subsequent public inquiry into the entire project was harshly critical. It found that the economics of the project were questionable from the beginning, and the Crown corporation did not take seriously the legitimate concerns of local residents about methylmercury pollution.

All of these projects carried environmental risks. What corporations and governments see as opportunities for resource extraction, Indigenous Peoples consider as threats to their lands, air, and waters. The RCMP played a key role in the critical infrastructure enterprise. It gathered intelligence and shared information with industry "stakeholders." It also controlled protests and made arrests.

In 2013, the RCMP initiated Project Sitka in which it asked its divisions across the country to feed names into a central database collecting information on activists "willing and capable of using unlawful tactics" during Indigenous rights protests.[6] Eventually the police settled on the names and descriptions of eighty-nine individuals, from a longer list of about three hundred who had been investigated.

Project Sitka arose out of the RCMP's apprehension about Idle No More protests, which had begun in December 2012. Those actions were ignited by Conservative government legislation that favoured resource extraction and eroded environmental protections as well as Indigenous land and treaty rights.[7] The RCMP created profiles of activists and their associations and used a questionable psychological assessment about the level of threat

offered by each of the individuals. The list was designed to be available for front-line officers dealing with protests.

Authors Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan obtained the Sitka report using an access to information request. They say the Sitka dragnet went well beyond issues of criminality, to include information on protest events, land claims issues, speaking tours, and demands for an inquiry into the cases of murdered and missing Indigenous women. Calling it "a staggering affront to activities protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,"[8] they describe Sitka as being reminiscent of PROFUNC, which was described earlier in these pages. Sitka also bears similarity to the RCMP's "Red Power" project in the 1970s to identify and share photographs among police forces of "Indian extremists."

Project Sitka concluded in 2015 but it was reactivated in November 2016, just six days before prime minister Justin Trudeau announced that the federal cabinet had given approval for building the controversial Trans Mountain pipeline, to carry bitumen and other petroleum products from the Edmonton area to BC's southern coast. The documents showing reactivation of the list were obtained by researcher Miles Howe through an access to information request.

The RCMP was clearly anticipating protests when the Trudeau announcement occurred. The information acquired by Howe quotes from an email sent by a senior RCMP officer to divisions across the country. "We would like to update and, if required, add to protestor profiles across all divisions to support front-line operations in responding to public order events during protests," the email said. "Please provide any updates to Project Sitka's list of disruptive and volatile subjects from respective divisions."[9]

While the government and its security agencies were developing plans in the 2000s to extend and protect petroleum industry infrastructure, concern over the existential threat of climate change was building. In 1988 the United Nations created the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international group of leading climate scientists, to document the danger. Its reports have become increasingly urgent in tone. IPCC scientists are virtually certain that climate change is contributing to the recent torrent of

fires, floods, and violent storms and predict the situation will become much worse unless urgent action is taken.[10]

In 1992 political leaders began to meet under the auspices of the United Nations to consider mitigating steps. The first Earth Summit took place in Rio de Janeiro, where countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, but there was no mechanism to enforce the obligations. The Canadian government under Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien signed the treaty but had no credible plan to reduce emissions. In 1997, developed countries made binding commitments in the Kyoto Protocol to reduce emissions, but the targets did not apply to developing countries.[11]

The petroleum industry was receiving the same information from its in-house scientists as the United Nations and governments were from theirs. Corporations like Exxon, Shell, British Petroleum, and Suncor knew that the burning of fossil fuels would lead to dire consequences. In *The Petroleum Papers: Inside the Far-Right Conspiracy to Cover Up Climate Change*, Geoff Dembicki shows that industry players chose to conceal what they knew, and worse, to mount a campaign of denial and disinformation.

Dembicki describes how "Exxon, Koch Industries, Shell, and others rushed to exploit the oil sands, even as they privately learned it would crank up the climate's heat and cause 'catastrophic' death and destruction." He adds, "these companies quietly anticipated public outcry about climate change, and prepared a strategy to neutralize it." They lobbied governments against acting, mounted dishonest public relations campaigns questioning climate science, and funded denier groups.[12]

Stephen Harper, as Conservative leader of the Official Opposition in 2002, insisted that the science on climate change was "tentative and contradictory." He claimed that the Kyoto accord was a "socialist plot" that would cripple the oil and gas industries in Canada.[13] The Conservatives won the election in 2006 and in his first speech abroad, in London, Harper claimed that Canada was an "emerging energy superpower."[14] In 2011, the Harper government withdrew from the Kyoto accord, arguing that its targets for reductions were unrealistic and Canada could not meet them.

In 2014, the IPCC said unequivocally that if the global average temperature were to rise by more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the results would be catastrophic. They could include the

collapse of ice sheets, a rapid rise in sea levels, difficulty growing enough food, huge die-offs of forests, and mass extinctions of plant and animal species. The IPCC concluded that "stabilizing temperature increases … would require an urgent and fundamental departure from business as usual."[15]

The Liberals returned to power in 2015 and participated in the Paris summit on climate change that year. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was back as a participant in international efforts to confront climate change, but he also reassured industry audiences that Canada would continue to mine the oilsands and build pipelines to get that oil to international markets. The Liberals not only supported the Kinder Morgan corporation's plan to double-track the Trans Mountain pipeline from Alberta to southern British Columbia, but when the company wanted out, the government bought the project and promised to complete it. Trudeau's government also supported the Keystone XL proposal to send oilsands bitumen through the US to refineries on the Gulf Coast, a project that President Joe Biden shelved soon after being inaugurated in 2021.

Bill McKibben, of the environmental organization 350.org, has described the Canadian prime minister as a climate hypocrite. "This having-your-cake-and-burning-it-too is central to Canada's self-image/energy policy," he wrote in the *Guardian* in 2020.[16]

The Liberal government insists that Canada can both expand oilsands production and meet its targets for reducing emissions. Its centrepiece is a carbon tax that the government believes will encourage a market shift toward renewable sources of energy. The strategy also includes massive subsidies to the oil and gas industry to develop emission-reducing technologies.

In December 2023, the government announced that it will also place a hard cap on emissions from the oil and gas industry beginning in 2026. Ottawa says the cap will reduce emissions in 2030 to between 35 and 38 percent below those in 2019. Ottawa believes that the reductions can be accomplished while allowing production to increase by 12 percent above 2019 levels by using improved technology, including the underground storage of carbon emissions.[17]

In 2014, while the IPCC was assembling its reports and advising how to reduce emissions, the RCMP was pursuing a different agenda, one that placed it at odds with the world's best science. In 2014, the RCMP prepared a report called "Criminal Threats to the Canadian Petroleum Industry." The report was shared with "critical infrastructure stakeholders" in government and the oil and gas sector. The document was obtained by Greenpeace and reported on by the *Globe and Mail* in 2015.[18]

The RCMP report describes "a growing, highly organized and well-financed anti-Canadian petroleum movement, that consists of peaceful activists, militants and violent extremists, who are opposed to society's reliance on fossil fuels." But any distinctions to be made among those three groups soon vanished. In just a few lines described as "key findings" on the report's first page, the word "extremist" is used five times.[19]

The report refers to several threatening "non-governmental groups," including Greenpeace, Tides Canada, and Sierra Club Canada, without mentioning that they are all well-established organizations with a history of peaceful activity. The report warns that low-level violence by (unnamed) single-issue groups could move beyond lawful protest to violence. By way of example, the report draws an offensive and entirely inappropriate parallel between Canadian environmentalists and two murderous right-wing extremists: Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber in 1995, and Anders Behring Breivik, who murdered seventy-seven people in Norway in 2011.

Echoing Conservative politicians and certain pundits, the report says that the environmental movement in Canada is largely funded from abroad. It does not mention that any such funding would be dwarfed by the money provided by US-based corporations like ExxonMobil and Koch Industries. For years a Koch refinery in Minnesota was the major US processor of oilsands bitumen and a Koch subsidiary was one of the largest leaseholders in the Cold Lake oilsands area. The Koch family was a key financial supporter of the US Tea Party movement, whose members were virulently anti-tax and anti-government and opposed any plans to reduce carbon emissions. The Koch corporations, Exxon, and a variety of other companies sent millions of dollars a year to the Fraser Institute and other right-wing Canadian think tanks that denied or minimized climate change.[20] Nor does the RCMP report mention that most of the big players in the oil industry,

particularly the oilsands, are multinationals who pour millions of dollars annually into corporate lobbying and public relations campaigns.

The report acknowledges that extraction projects on Indigenous land have historically been contentious issues. Some people inhabiting those lands, says the report, “have aligned themselves with violent aboriginal extremists.” There is no acknowledgement that many, if not most, of the projects are proposed for lands that have never been surrendered and are not covered by existing treaties. For the RCMP, Indigenous Peoples, who were considered threats and obstacles during colonial settlement, continue to be seen in that light.

The report says the groups such as Greenpeace or the Sierra Club Canda “assert” that climate change is the most serious environmental threat, and “they believe” that human-created emissions “are directly linked to the continued use of fossil fuels.” These groups, says the report, “promote a one-sided vison” leading to anti-petroleum opposition. They exaggerate the oilsands’ environmental footprint and challenge the safety and integrity of the petroleum industry.

These are essentially petroleum industry talking points that placed the RCMP among climate change deniers, even while the IPCC was issuing an urgent call for action on human-induced climate change. The RCMP report also ignores the many international summits since 1982 in which political leaders have attempted to mitigate climate change. The RCMP authors chose to repeat, unfiltered, the disinformation fed to them by an industry lobby group.

In its crude methodology, the “Critical Threats” report conjures the *RCMP Security Bulletins* that so annoyed Jack Pickersgill in 1939. He found in those reports an inability to distinguish between facts and hearsay, a lack of discrimination between legitimate social and political criticism and subversive doctrine, and an approach that paints labour organizers and mild radicals as communists. The RCMP now replaced those targeted individuals in its report with “anti-petroleum extremists” and “violent aboriginal extremists.”

Given repeated and increasingly urgent warnings from the IPCC and elsewhere, we might well ask: Who are the extremists? Are they

environmentalists and Indigenous land defenders trying to convince us about the urgency of society's weaning itself off fossil fuels? Are they industry executives who promote denial and delay while continuing to mine their products? Are they politicians who sit in legislatures and parliaments, knowing better but choosing not to act?

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration described summer 2023 as the earth's hottest since 1880 when global record-keeping of temperatures began. NASA says bluntly that the record-setting heat derives from human-driven global warming.[21]

In 2023, Canada experienced its worst forest fire season ever. All thirteen provinces and territories were affected, with large fires in Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec. As of December 2023, 18.4 million hectares of land (45.7 million acres) had burned in more than 6,000 fires. That is equivalent to 5 percent of the entire forested area of Canada, an area larger than Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island combined.[22]

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians were forced to leave their homes. The entire northern city of Yellowknife had to be evacuated. Homes, farms, and businesses were destroyed across the country. Several firefighters and a helicopter pilot lost their lives. From Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, and in Northern Canada, people not affected directly by the fires experienced thick and choking smoke. Medical researchers warn that smoke inhalation can have serious health consequences in both the short and long terms.[23]

The strategy of the petroleum industry has shifted from outright denial to one of delay. The companies say we need fossil fuels, and they will keep extracting them. The horizon for phaseouts keeps getting extended. During the past several years, some companies promised to make significant investments in alternate, sustainable energy sources, but with a resurgence in oil prices spurred on largely by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, even that facade has been dropped.

In 2023, the new CEO of oilsands giant Suncor Energy Inc. said the company has been too focused on energy transition and must get back to an oil-centred effort. It sold off renewable energy assets and purchased full ownership in an oilsands mine. Shell Oil, British energy giant BP, and Exxon have all doubled down on oil production while the world burns.[24]

People and governments have taken notice. In September 2023, the State of California launched a lawsuit against several of the world's biggest oil companies. This is not the first such action, but it may be the largest. According to a *New York Times* report, California is claiming that "starting in the 1950s, the companies and their allies intentionally downplayed the risks posed by fossil fuels to the public, even though they understood that their products were likely to lead to significant global warming." This approach is reminiscent of how decades ago the tobacco industry dealt with mounting evidence that smoking cigarettes caused cancer.

In its claim, California alleges that "Exxon, Chevron and the other companies have continued to mislead the public about their commitment to reducing emissions in recent years, boasting about minor investments in alternative fuels while reaping record profits from the production of planet-warming fossil fuels."[25] California is seeking an abatement fund to pay for the future damages caused by climate related disasters in the state.

If we are looking for extremists, we can find them among the petroleum industry's anti-environmental and anti-government fundamentalists. They want to extract every ounce of oil before their party ends. It is they who are complicit in destroying critical infrastructure, the homes, farms, businesses, and cottages of people across the country. When might we expect the RCMP, CSIS, and Canadian Border Services to invite the Elsipogtog and Wet'suwet'en First Nations, Greenpeace, and Tides Canada to a roundtable sharing information they have collected on the people who inhabit corporate boardrooms?

The state has a duty to protect its citizens. Unfortunately, the RCMP has interpreted its mission as spying upon and harassing those who work for environmental integrity and a prosperity that is more widely shared, while it aligns its efforts with those who want to prevent that change from occurring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have begun or completed this book without the help and support of many people, and I thank them sincerely. Otto Driedger alerted me to the materials he had collected from Frank Hadesbeck so many years ago and offered to share them with me. Phyllis Pederson and Richard Blayone, Frank Hadesbeck's niece and nephew, shared family documents and photos with me, and Mrs. Pederson granted me several interviews.

I have benefited by reading many books, articles, and university theses regarding the history of surveillance in Canada. One work among many stands out for its value to me in this project. It is *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America*. One of its authors, Gregory S. Kealey, has also been especially generous to me with his time and advice.

Then there are the researchers who have made access to information requests regarding the RCMP Security Service. Once released, those files are available in the Library and Archives reading room in Ottawa. My research has benefitted greatly from the work of others.

Some people have provided me with advice and guidance. Others granted interviews, pursued research leads in other cities and provinces, or read either selected chapters or my entire manuscript. These good people include Pat Atkinson, Lorne Brown, Nik Burton, Stephen Dale, Don Delhomeau, Charlene Dobmeier, Florence Driedger, Al Dyck, John Evans, Alvin Finkel, Tibor Glant in Hungary, Don Hall, Gerry Jones, William Knight, Don Kossick, Denise Kouri, Ed Lehman, Nick Lloyd in Barcelona, Mark McGeough, Dr. Sally Mahood, George Melnyk, Rob Milen, Don Mitchell, Judit Molnar in Hungary, Henri Sader, Judy Samuelson, Sherv Shragge, Tyler Wentzell, Alma Wiebe, Ian E. Wilson, and Glenn Wright.

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I want, finally, to thank my wife and life partner Martha Wiebe for her enduring love, generosity, and forbearance, not to mention her proofreading.

A NOTE ON THE PUBLISHER AND THE RCMP

An RCMP security report dated September 8, 1975, labelled “Secret” and titled “Third World Organizations and Activities: Toronto, Ontario,” included information about three Toronto-based international solidarity “action groups” that the RCMP considered “of security interest”—the Toronto Committee for Links between Southern Africa and Canada (TCLSAC), the Latin American Working Group (LAWG), and the Development Education Centre (DEC). These three groups, the report’s author claimed, viewed themselves ideologically as “part of the Anti-Imperialist Movement working towards the demise of the United States and the Capitalist system.” The key individuals in these groups formed “a web of interlocking relationships.”

One of these groups, DEC, which was founded in 1972 with seed money from Oxfam Canada, was a non-hierarchical workers’ collective that produced and distributed films, slide-audio tape shows, and a regular radio program, reprinted articles, and ran a library and bookstore. The Development Education Centre was “a misleading name,” according to the author of the RCMP report, because “it gives the impression of being respectable and only interested in Educational Research. However, closer investigation has revealed that DEC is in reality, a radical collective of highly-political individuals, who are predominantly Marxist, and seek to promote revolutionary (non-violent) social change.”

Not long after this RCMP report was written, members of DEC met with another group of activists from Dumont Press Graphix, a typesetting and publishing co-operative from Kitchener, Ontario, to discuss plans to

work together to build a small book publishing house. That small, independent, social movement press was founded in 1977 as Between the Lines. Almost fifty years later, BTL is still run as a workers' collective and remains true to its activist roots of publishing books that challenge oppression, support justice, and build solidarity.

NOTES

PREFACE

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18 For Lenihan's drinking, see Gilbert Levine, ed., *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 1998), 155–56. See

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19 Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2020), 151–53, 169–71.

20 FHP in possession of the author.

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1 Donald Mahar, *Shattered Illusions: KGB Cold War Espionage in Canada* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), Epub, 169.

2 LAC, CSIS, file on Tommy Douglas, A-2011-0036, 000092–94. The report is dated November 13, 1946. Douglas’s name appears only in passing in the RCMP report of the LPP meeting. This ATIA file was obtained by the Canadian Press.

3 For details about the internment of these women, see Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920–1950* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), 166–67. Additional details from FHP in possession of the author.

4 Chris Ewing-Weiz, “Tillie Taylor Was Dedicated to the Cause of Social Justice,” obituary in the *Globe and Mail*, November, 2, 2011, theglobeandmail.com.

5 See Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006).

6 See Brett Quiring, *Saskatchewan Politicians: Lives Past and Present* (Regina: Great Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), 19. For Berezowski’s campaigns on behalf of the Labour Progressive Party, see LAC MG32-G21, William C. Beeching Fonds, vol. 8, file 8.

7 Johnston, *Great Restlessness*, 195.

8 Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1977), 147–54.

9 Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 68. See also Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933–34* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993), 221.

10 Avakumovic, *Communist Party in Canada*, 170.

12. COLD WAR IN SASKATCHEWAN

1 Author email exchange with Anne Moxon, May 11, 2023.

2 Author interview with Phyllis Pederson, May 15, 2023.

3 FHP in possession of the author, “Uncle’s Jobs,” compiled by Hadesbeck’s niece Phyllis Pederson.

4 FHP in possession of the author, “Uncle’s Jobs.” Pederson also shared three letters which Hadesbeck wrote while in hospital in Edmonton to his wife, Bernadette.

5 Classified ad, *Leader-Post* (Regina), June 25, 1949, 2, via Newspapers.com.

6 FHPAS (unprocessed), call no. R93-224, box 3097. The letter is dated January 18, 1951.

7 Information Services Corporation, Historical Request, City of Regina Plan I 5211, block 35, lot 1, address 2002 Alexandra.

8 Information Services Corporation, Historical Request, City of Regina Plan 101168793, block 160, lot 49; Plan DV4404, block 150, lot 20, address 1277 Wascana.
9 FHP in possession of the author. Campbell's letter was dated February 18, 1947.
10 FHP in possession of the author.
11 See *Henderson's Directory*, also RCMP Graves website, rcmpgraves.com.
12 Author interview with Ed Lehman, January 21, 2022.
13 Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 116.
14 Author interview with Sherv Shragge, January 12, 2022.
15 "RCMP Spied on Tommy Douglas, Files Reveal," CBC News, December 17, 2006, cbc.ca. As a result of ATIA requests from the Canadian Press, LAC released nine files containing more than 1,100 pages of Security Service documents on Douglas.
16 LAC, CSIS, Tommy Douglas, ATIA request A-2011-00361, vol. 2, 000120.
17 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 221.
18 LAC, CSIS, Tommy Douglas, ATIA request A-2011-00361, vol. 1, 000056.
19 Doris Shackleton, *Tommy Douglas* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 55.
20 LAC, CSIS, Tommy Douglas, ATIA request A-2011-00361, vol. 1, 000085.
21 LAC, MG32 G21 vol. 6 [Beeching]. Letter dated June 4, 1951.
22 *Leader Post* (Regina), June 16, 1973, 28.

13. MEDICARE AS COMMUNIST PLOT

1 LAC, CSIS, medicare, ATIA request A-2013-00509, vol. 1, 000044.
2 For a more thorough description of the introduction of medicare in Saskatchewan, see Dennis Gruending, *Promises to Keep: A Political Biography of Allan Blakeney* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990), 38–45. See also Dennis Gruending, *Emmett Hall: Establishment Radical* (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2005), 96-122.
3 FHP in possession of the author.
4 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 1, 000059–67.
5 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 1, 000066.
6 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 1, 000033.
7 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 3, 000167.
8 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 3, 000203.
9 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 3, 000176.
10 Lorne Brown and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1973), 91.
11 Author interview with Dr. Sally Mahood, June 2022.
12 LAC, CSIS, medicare, vol. 3, 000073–84.

14. BETRAYING A COMRADE

1 LAC, CSIS, Tommy Douglas, ATIA request A2011-00361, vol. 3, 000238-43. Douglas is mentioned only fleetingly in the Secret Service documents related to John (Mac) Reynolds.
2 "Volunteer of the Week—William Beeching," Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War, spanishcivilwar.ca.
3 LAC, Mackenzie-Papineau fonds from Russian archives. For Beeching, MG10-K2, fond 545/file list 6, file 542 (reel: 262).

4 FHPAS, accession no. R78-185, “Communist Party Radio Broadcast,” February 24, 1939.
5 See “William Charles (Bill) Beeching,” *Focus on Socialism*, focusonsocialism.ca.
6 Author interview with Leonard Fischer, February 4, 2022.
7 FHPAS (unprocessed), R93-224, box 3096.
8 LAC, CSIS, Tommy Douglas, ATIA request A2011-00361, vol. 3, 000239.
9 The Beeching audio interview found at the CBC Archives bears the call number TBN 950802-49.
10 Beeching interview with John Reynolds, September 10, 1965.
11 See Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 339–42.
12 FHP in possession of the author.
13 FHP in possession of the author.
14 University of Regina Archives, Dr. James McRorie papers, accession no. 2014-15, box 12/23, file 164.
15 Frank Hadesbeck interview with John Reynolds, September 11, 1965, CBC Radio Archives, call no. 950802-36 (1) and 950802-36 (2).
16 FHP in possession of the author.
17 “Changes of Name,” *Saskatchewan Gazette*, 1917 to 1950.
18 The party’s central committee involved a larger group than its central executive committee.
19 LAC, William C. Beeching fonds, MG32-G21, vol. 1, file 15, 5.
20 LAC, William C. Beeching fonds, MG32-G21, vol. 1, file 15, 11.
21 LAC, William C. Beeching fonds, MG32-G21, vol 1, file 14.
22 LAC, William C. Beeching fonds, MG32-G21, vol. 3, file 5, Central Executive Committee Minutes, February 4, 1971.
23 Reached at his home in British Columbia in December 2023, Gehring said that he did oversee the Security Service in Regina, but he does not remember Hadesbeck. Gehring added that the events in question occurred more than fifty years ago. He is in his mid-nineties.
24 FHP in possession of the author, William Beeching letter to Frank Hadesbeck, July 23, 1976.

15. CASTING A WIDE NET

1 FHP in possession of the author.
2 Author interview with Ed Lehman, January 21, 2022.
3 LAC, CSIS, RG 146-3, National Farmers Union, vol. 5, file no. 1025-9-91046. Report dated August 19, 1969 (ATIA request).
4 Author interview with Don Kossick, August 23, 2023.
5 See Lorne Brown and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James, Lewis & Samuel, 1973), 119–23.
6 “Roy Atkinson, Activist for Farmers, Dies at 92,” CBC News, May 19, 2016, cbc.ca.
7 Author interview with Pat Atkinson, October, 10, 2021.
8 “Monks Involved in Social Justice,” *St. Peter’s Abbey Newsletter* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 14–15.
9 For a thorough description of Key Sectors, see Steve Hewitt, “Reforming the Canadian Security State: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Security Service and the ‘Key Sectors’ Program,” *Intelligence and National Security* 17, no. 4 (2002): 165–84.
10 LAC, CSIS, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada, Saskatchewan,” See vol. 1, 000177–179. Report dated January 3, 1973. (ATIA request A2010-

00678.)
11 LAC, RG146, “University of Saskatchewan—Regina Campus,” vol. 2774, box 97, part 3. Dated October 10, 1968. (ATIA request AH-1999/00104.)
12 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus,” vol. 2774, part 1. (ATIA request AH-1999/00104.)
13 Author interview with Rob Milen, January 14, 2022.
14 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 2, box 118. (ATIA request AH-2000/00314.)
15 Author interview with Milen.
16 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Association of Métis and non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 5, box 118.
17 LAC, CSIS, “RG 146, Association of Métis and non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 5, box 1.18.
18 LAC, CSIS, “RG 146, Association of Métis and non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 5, box 118, report dated March 23, 1973.
19 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Association of Métis and non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 5, box 118, document dated April 10, 1973.
20 LAC, CSIS, “RG 146, Association of Métis and non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan,” part 5, box 118, document dated April 5, 1973.
21 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Native Extremism,” vol. 4250, part 1, box 106. (ATIA request AH-2000/00114.)
22 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Native Extremism,” vol. 4250, part 1, box 106.
23 George Taylor, Obituary, *Star Phoenix* (Saskatoon), May 4, 2012, thestarphoenix.remembering.ca. For Tillie Taylor, see the *Globe and Mail* obituary, November 2, 2011, theglobeandmail.com.

16. SPYING ON THE NDP

1 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada,” vol. 3, 000511. (ATIA request A 2010-00678.)
2 LAC, MG 32-G21, William C. Beeching fonds, vol. 10, file 2, Letter dated July 15, 1975.
3 For background on the Waffle and the NDP, see Dennis Gruending, *Promises to Keep: A Political Biography of Allan Blakeney* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990), chap. 7 and 8.
4 See stories in *Leader-Post* (Regina), June 9, 1971, 31, and July 6, 1971, 1, via Newspapers.com.
5 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement,” vol. 2, 000178.
6 LAC, CSIS, RG 146, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement,” vol. 3, 000481–490.
7 See LAC, CSIS, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement,” vol. 3, 000317–18 and 000386–88.
8 Author interview with Lorne Brown, November 15, 2022.
9 Author interview with Don Mitchell, May 16, 2023.
10 Author interview with Denise Kouri, August 25, 2023.
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12 LAC, CSIS, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement,” vol. 3, 000317.
13 LAC, CSIS, “Saskatchewan Waffle Movement,” vol. 3, 000391–93.

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1 Jane Gerster, “The RCMP Revisited,” *Walrus*, November 2021, 50.

2 Lorne Brown and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1973), 79–83.
3 John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows: The RCMP Security Service* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980), xi. Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), is another good source describing the Security Service.
4 Sawatsky,*Men in the Shadows*, 18.
5 Sawatsky,*Men in the Shadows*, 28.
6 Sawatsky,*Men in the Shadows*, 48.
7 FHP in possession of the author.
8 FHP in possession of the author.
9 See RCMP Graves, rcmpgraves.com.
10 FHP in possession of the author.
11 Author interview with Ed Lehman, January 21, 2002.
12 Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby,*Secret Service*, 183.
13 Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby,*Secret Service*, 185–95.
14 In addition to Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby,*Secret Service*, see Sawatsky,*Men in the Shadows*, 124–38; Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine: Investigating the Loyalty of Canada's Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press); Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917–1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Gary Kinsman, Dieter Buse, and Mercedes Steedman, eds., *Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000); Reginald Whitaker and Steve Hewitt, *Canada and the Cold War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2003); Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Security State, 1945–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009). See also: Sarah Fodey, director, *The Fruit Machine*, 2018, 81 minutes.
15 Frances Reilly's thesis later became a chapter in a book. See "Operation Profunc: The Cold War Plan to Intern Canadian Communists," in *The Bridge in the Parks: The Five Eyes and Cold War Counter-Intelligence*, ed. Dennis G. Molinaro (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 125–49. See also Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 245–47.
16 Reilly, "Operation Profunc," 126.
17 LAC, CSIS, medicare, 000181. (ATIA request A-2013-00509.)
18 LAC, MG32 G21, William C. Beeching fonds, vol. 6, file 16, 1960.
19 LAC, MG32 G21, William C. Beeching fonds, vol. 6, file 18, 1963.

18. WINDING DOWN

1 Frank Hadesbeck, in his notes, provided the names of various of his RCMP handlers. I mention some, but not all, of them in this book. Only two of those officers are still living. One is Donald Gehring, whom I have contacted. I have not been able to reach the other officer, whom I describe as Roy M.
2 John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows: The RCMP Security Service* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980), 48.
3 FHP in possession of the author.
4 Hadesbeck's observation is borne out by journalists and academics writing about Starnes. See Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in*

Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 325–26, and Sawatsky,*Men in the Shadows*, 200–201.

5 Steve Hewitt, *Snitch: A History of the Modern Intelligence Informer* (New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 35.

6 Frank Hadesbeck to Phyllis Pederson, undated 1980. Letter in author's possession.

7 Bernadette Hadesbeck to Phyllis Pederson, June 24, 1970. Letter in author's possession.

8 Frank Hadesbeck to Phyllis Pederson, July 25, 1970. Letter in author's possession.

9 Information about Bernadette Hadesbeck's Catholicism and details of her funeral were provided to the author by Phyllis Pederson.

10 Phyllis Pederson correspondence with author, July 22, 2023.

11 FHPAS (unprocessed), call no. R93-224, box 3096.

12 FHPAS (unprocessed), call no. R93-224, box 3096. Hadesbeck details his various ailments in a handwritten note titled "Health."

19. MEMOIRS

1 Author interview with Ed Lehman, January 21, 2022.

2 Hadesbeck's various stories and poems are among his unprocessed papers with the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, call no. R93-224, boxes 3095 and 3096.

3 FHPAS (unprocessed), call no. R93-224, box 3095.

4 Author interview with Al Dyck, February 12, 2021.

5 Author interview with Nik Burton, July 25, 2020.

6 Hadesbeck's formal papers at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan bear accession no. R78-185.

7 For background on RCMP dirty tricks and the McDonald Commission, see Jeff Sallot, *Nobody Said No: The Real Story about How the Mounties Always Get Their Man* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1979).

8 FHP in possession of the author. The material consists of a note from Shragge to Hadesbeck, as well as a draft introduction and questions to be posed in a CBC television interview.

9 See Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 247 and 611n43. See also a brief that Pat Walsh prepared for the McDonald Commission in 1967. When the commission refused to hear him, he reprinted the brief in a book called *RCMP Security & Intelligence against Communism in Canada.* He described himself on the cover of the booklet as a former RCMP special agent, anticommunistarchive.wordpress.com.

10 John English, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, vol. 3, 1957–1968* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 166.

11 See Walsh, *RCMP Security & Intelligence against Communism in Canada*.

12 "Calvin MacDonald, Undercover RCMP Officer," CBC Radio Archives, from 1963. The audio interview runs 17 min. 13 sec.

13 Mark Leier, *Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden; Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2013), 92–94; 145–50.

14 FHP in possession of the author. Driedger provided his notes and an audio recording to the author.

15 FHP in possession of the author.

20. A DOUBLE LIFE

1 Author interview with Al Dyck, February 12, 2021.
2 Author interview with Otto Driedger, November 9, 2020.
3 Paul Edwards, “Recalling the Spanish Civil War,” *Leader-Post* (Regina), October 13, 1984, D-3. See also Hadesbeck’s diary at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
4 *Leader Post* (Regina), October 31, 1984.
5 See Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War, spanishcivilwar.ca.
6 Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War.
7 Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War.
8 FHP in possession of the author.
9 Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War.
10 FHP in possession of the author, Audio interview with Otto Driedger, November 1987.
11 Hadesbeck’s name on the commemorative wall is misspelled as Hadesbek. The *c* is missing.
12 Letter provided to the author by Phyllis Pederson.
13 The note was titled “To Whom It May Concern,” and was provided to the author by Phyllis Pederson.
14 Frank Hadesbeck’s probate records are found at the Court of Queen’s Bench in Regina, Docket #SUR-RG-00317-2008.

21. SUPPRESSING DISSENT

1 Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 253.
2 Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 481–84.
3 See Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby, “Surveillance of Environmental Movements in Canada: Critical Infrastructure Protection and the Petro-Security Apparatus,” *Contemporary Justice Review* 20, no. 1 (2017): 51–70.
4 Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan, *Policing Indigenous Movements: Dissent and the Security State* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2018), 70–71.
5 For details on state surveillance on those opposing Northern Gateway, see Crosby and Monaghan, *Policing Indigenous Movements*, 83–90.
6 Jorge Barrera, “RCMP Reactivated List of Flagged Activists Days before Trans Mountain Decision,” CBC News, January 14, 2020, cbc.ca.
7 Crosby and Monaghan,*Policing Indigenous Movements*, 99–100.
8 Crosby and Monaghan, *Policing Indigenous Movements*, 2.
9 Jorge Barrera, “RCMP Reactivated List of Flagged Activists Days before Trans Mountain Decision,” CBC News, January 14, 2020.
10 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: Summary for Policymakers*, 2022, ipcc.ch.
11 Greta Thunberg, *The Climate Book* (New York: Penguin Press, 2023), 26, 27.
12 Geoff Dembicki, *The Petroleum Papers: Inside the Far-Right Conspiracy to Cover Up Climate Change* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2022), 5.
13 “Harper Letter Called Kyoto ‘Socialist Scheme,’” *Toronto Star*, January 30, 2007.
14 Jane Taber, “PM Brands Canada an ‘Energy Superpower,’”*Globe and Mail*, July 15, 2006, theglobeandmail.com.

15 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *AR5 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2014*, 2014, ipcc.ch.
16 Bill McKibben, "When It Comes to Climate Hypocrisy, Canada's Leaders Have Reached a New Low," *Guardian*, February 5, 2020, theguardian.com.
17 Peter Zimonjic, "Federal Government Unveils What It Calls a 'Strict' Oil and Gas Cap to Curb Emissions," CBC News, December 7, 2023, cbc.ca.
18 Shawn McCarthy, "'Anti-petroleum' Movement a Growing Security Threat to Canada, RCMP Say," *Globe and Mail*, February 17, 2015, theglobeandmail.com.
19 RCMP, "Criminal Threats to the Canadian Petroleum Industry," Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Assessment, 2014, 1. The entire report can be found at: statewatch.org.
20 Dembicki, *Petroleum Papers*, 48–49, 51, 154.
21 "NASA Announces Summer 2023 Hottest on Record," NASA news release 23-105, September 14, 2023, nasa.gov.
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23 Isabelle Gallant, "How Does Wildfire Smoke Affect Long-Term Health?," CBC Radio, June 1, 2023, cbc.ca. See also Ismail Shakil, "Smoke from Canadian Wildfires Sets Off Health Alerts in New York, Ottawa," Reuters, June 6, 2023, reuters.com.
24 John Vaillant, "As Our Forests Burn, Oil Companies Are Doubling Down on Their Old Business Models," *Globe and Mail*, August 29, 2023, theglobeandmail.com.
25 David Gelles, "California Sues Giant Oil Companies, Citing Decades of Deception," *New York Times*, September 15, 2023, nytimes.com.

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